THE EXPULSION OF THE GERMAN POPULATION FROM THE TERRITORIES EAST OF THE ODER-NEISSE-LINE

A selection and translation from

DOKUMENTATION DER VERTREIBUNG DER DEUTSCHEN AUS OST-MITTELEUROPA

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FOREWORD

In the fateful course of World War II which in its prelude as well as in its actual conduct was accompanied by so many violations of the law of nations and in both phases caused the spectre of total destruction to appear for peoples as a whole, the expulsion of the Germans from their eastern homelands marks a final stage. It may also be interpreted as the closing event in the struggle, going on for centuries among nationalities, who had been living together in the eastern zone of Central Europe. In fact the uprooting of so many millions was in itself as well as in its consequences a process unprecedented in human, social and political terms.

It has long been felt that a process of this scope and fatal influence needed a thorough investigation with as much impartiality as possible. Such a project should not be undertaken primarily with any polemic intent but rather with the purpose of clarifying a matter, the full consequences of which should be kept in mind by those charged with building a new and happier Europe.

Undoubtedly an attempt of this sort incurs considerable difficulties. Not only must emotions of a very understandable nature be subdued conscientiously but the facts themselves are hard to get at. No record has been kept on either side which could convey substantial knowledge of the fateful happenings. The first task, therefore, was to collect reliable material covering the process of expulsion with all the variations involved in its different phases and localities. Only a few letters and diaries had been preserved. In the main the documents which were brought together consisted of private statements and reports written down after the events. If in some cases the memory of those who put their experiences on paper was blurred in regard to minor matters, this seems to be more than counterbalanced by the fact that experiences of this kind obviously leave an indelible inpression upon the human mind, so that the sources collected proved surprisingly valuable in their fullness and concreteness.

But with this first appraisal the task was not finished. On the initiative of the *Bundesministerium für Flüchtlinge, Vertriebene und Kriegsgeschädigte* an editorial committee was set up in 1951. Theodor Schieder, Professor of History at the University of Cologne, acted as its chairman. His associates were two historians, P. Rassow and H. Rothfels, as well as R. Laun, a Professor of Public Law, and a leading Archivist, the late A. Diestelkamp. Under the guidance of this committee, especially of T. Schieder, a working staff of younger researchers undertook a thorough examination of all available sources. The latter were sifted from the viewpoint of external as well as internal criticism; that is to say their authenticity as well as their veracity were thoroughly checked. In the course of this investigation certain methods for dealing with the problem of a "mass documentation" were evolved. Concerning these methods the Foreword to the German edition gives a full account[1]) which cannot be repeated here. It should be emphasized, however, that the "best" documents selected for publication are not necessarily those most vivid in coloring and individual shading, and certainly not those indulging in generalities or most abundant in tales of horror. Preference was given rather to those reports which could be checked and counterchecked or were impressive by reason of immediateness and accuracy. It should also be emphasized, and very explicitly so, that the committee as well as the staff worked in complete independence of the Federal Government. This was an indispensable prerequisite for their undertaking and, in point of fact, not the slightest attempt at interference was made from any quarter.

The editorial committee plans to issue other volumes in addition to those dealing with the expulsion from the territories east of the Oder-Neisse-Line. As of the present moment they assume full responsibility for the first two volumes of the series. In the abridged English version, presented herewith, the analysis preceding and supplementing the documents has been rendered in full and in as exact a wording as possible. Of the documents, however, for obvious reasons, only a fraction could be put into one manageable volume. Regarding this selection the committee acted in an advisory capacity. For scholarly purposes, however, it wishes to refer to the complete collection published in German.

The translation was entrusted to Professor Dr. Vivian Stranders M. A. (Univ. Lond.)

The members of the Committee want to conclude this Foreword by reiterating some principles which they set forth at the end of the original Foreword as well. They feel themselves bound solely by the ethical standards of scholarly research. As far as politics are concerned at all they fully agree with the attitude expressed in the "Charter" of the German expellees which emphatically renounces any idea of revenge or retaliation. The volumes they have worked on are in no way meant to counteract this attitude or to promote mere sentiments of self-pity. In the committee's view any such intention would be incompatible with the adequate recognition of the extent to which Germans have contributed to the fateful course of the two last decades. What the members of the committee hope for is rather to confirm the conviction, that events like those documented in the following pages must not be repeated, if Europe is to have any future at all. They hope for a new international order, within that extended region which so recently became an "inferno" of Nations. It is not by shutting one's eyes to, but rather by facing recent events squarely and with an awakened sense of responsibility that we can contribute to encouraging moral forces which may prove capable of overcoming the tensions between the peoples of Eastern Central Europe and of Europa as a whole. Only if placed in this perspective can the sufferings of our generation bear fruit for posterity.

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[1]) For details see also the article by Dr. Martin Broszat in: Vierteljahrshefte f. Zeitgeschichte, April 1954 pp. 202—215.

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Introductory Description

First Section

I. The German population in the territories east of the Oder and Neisse before the beginning of the Soviet invasion of Eastern Germany

Every description of the expulsion of the Germans from the East, if it is to start properly, must begin with the migrations of the population which took place throughout the *Reich* since 1939 and during the Second World War. Very large scale migrations, both directed and spontaneous, on the one hand evacuations, on the other concentrations of people changed the status of the population in the different parts of the *Reich* very considerably in comparison with pre-war times.

During the first half of the war, until the years 1942—1943, millions of men had been called up for military service[1]). Their elimination from civil life and from the economy of the country was to be compensated for by the employment of numerous prisoners of war and foreign workers. These were in the main Poles, Frenchmen and Russians[2]).

There were also other kinds of shiftings in the population, these were particularly due to the establishment of new industries and the relocation of works and plants which were of military importance.

Then there were all those persons who were sent as administrators and managers into territories beyond the frontiers of the *Reich*, which had been conquered and occupied during the first years of the war[3]). And finally there were the hundreds of thousands of ethnic Germans, who, in the course of 'resettling' of scattered German communities from the East of Europe, were accommodated in the territory of the *Reich*[4]).

As the air raids got worse and worse in the year 1943 still greater changes in the status of the population took place. About half a million civilians were killed by these raids[5]), and the evacuation or voluntary withdrawal began particularly of women and children, from the large towns and from the most endangered parts in the north-west of the *Reich*, and from Berlin.

The magnitude of this shifting of the population is seen from the fact that the large towns of the *Reich* (within the frontiers of 1937), which before the beginning of the war had a population of 22.5 million, had at the end of 1944 one of only 15 million[6]). Altogether there were at the end of the war about 10 million people, i. e. nearly a sixth of the whole civil population of Germany living as air raid evacuees scattered all over the *Reich*. They were dwelling in the most various kinds of emergency quarters and refuges, at nearer or more remote distances from their homes[7]).

All these shiftings of the population caused by the war affected also the East German territory on the other side of the Oder and Neisse. To be sure: In the predominantly agrarian territory of the East the proportion of men called up for military service was even higher than in the industrial districts of the *Reich*. For not so many men were freed from military service in agriculture as in industry, because it was easier to substitute foreign workers for farm labourers than for skilled workmen in industry.

The result of this was that the working population of East Prussia, East Pomerania, East Brandenburg, and Lower Silesia consisted in a large measure of women and foreign workers, a fact which proved a great disadvantage when the flight from the Red Army was to come about.

It is true that, owing to the greater distance from the air bases of the Allies, there was more security from the air raids in the territory to the East of the Oder and Neisse than in Central and West Germany. All the same, the ever increased radius of activity of the Allied air force during the last years of the war led to a flight into the country also from the large towns in East Germany — though their number was small with the exception of Upper Silesia. As a result of being spared the air raids, Upper Silesia had developed into the only intact and first rate center of war industry. Here the evacuation of women and children from the towns was to some extent counter-balanced by the arrival of new workers.

The following table shows, how many of the population left the large cities of Eastern Germany during the latter years of the war[8]).

Large cities east of the Oder Neisse Line	Population on 17. May 1939	Population at the end of 1944	Decrease in population per cent
Königsberg	372 164	251 752	32.3
Danzig	267 251	236 439	11.5
Stettin	382 984	238 116	37.8
Breslau	629 565	527 128	16.3
Hindenburg Upper Silesia	126 220	121 729	3.6
Gleiwitz	117 250	111 999	4.5
Beuthen Upper Silesia	101 084	95 391	5.6

Hundreds of thousands of refugees from the air raids in the Central and Western territories of the *Reich* together with vast numbers of evacuees from the large Eastern German cities fled into the country districts of Eastern Germany. The increase of the population in the country there was particularly great in the near vicinity of the large cities. The same holds true of specifcally attractive parts of the country, such as the

Riesengebirge and the coast of the Baltic Sea. Particularly school children were sent to these parts (so-called "Kinderlandverschickung") and were found homes in the country far off from the cities, subject to air raids. As instances of the increase of the population in the country parts of Eastern Germany we give here some of the rural districts of the *Provinzen* east of the Oder Neisse Line; these districts show a particularly high degree of immigration.

The following table shows how many people streamed into the *Landkreises* (rural districts) of Eastern Germany during the latter years of the war:8)

Rural districts east of the Oder Neisse Line	Population on 17. May 1939	Population at the end of 1944	Increase in population per cent
Hirschberg (Silesia)	80 257	90 003	20.9
Reichenbach (Silesia)	85 428	98 392	15.2
Glatz (Silesia)	125 273	140 346	12.0
Stolp (Pomerania)	83 009	96 548	16.4
Regenwalde (Pomerania)	49 668	66 343	33.6
Samland (East Prussia)	120 246	146 929	22.2

The evacuation from Berlin had an even more direct effect upon Eastern Germany than did the evacuation from the western cities of the *Reich*. By the end of 1944 1.5 million had left Berlin9) they were first quartered in Brandenburg, but later great numbers were also brought to East Prussia, Silesia and even to the *Reichsgau Wartheland*. Taken together with the great numbers of West Germans, who had, mostly on their own initiative, found quarteres with relatives and friends in Eastern Germany, the stream of people coming from Berlin caused the number of the population in Eastern Germany to continually increase during the latter years of the war. This increase was, however, also caused by the considerable rise in the birth rate. For if one neglects the number of losses in the armed services, which need not be considered in calculating the number of people in Eastern Germany at the end of the war, the increase by birth during the latter years of the war was in Eastern Germany almost half a million higher than the decrease by mortality.

The natural increase of the population in the *Provinzes* east of the Oder Neisse Line from 1939—194310) is shown by the following table.

East Prussia11)	131 000
Silesia	232 000
East Pomerania12)	90 000
East Brandenburg13)	14 000
Total	467 000

The result of this natural increase of the population and above all of the influx of huge numbers of bombed out refugees was, that the population east of the Oder Neisse Line was in the spring of 1944 higher than in 1939. This was the case before the shifting of the population caused by the Russian advance. The increase had taken place although the number of men called up for military service was higher then in 1939 and existed irrespective of the prisoners of war and foreign workers in this territory.

The German population living in the territories of the *Reich* east of the Oder Neisse Line was as follows in 1939 and 1944 respectively[14]).

German territories east of the Oder Neisse Line (Frontiers of 1937)	According to the census of 17. May 1939	February/March 1944 (according to the 59. distribution period for ration coupons)
East Prussia	2 488 000	2 519 000
East Pomerania	1 895 000	1 861 000
East Brandenburg	645 000	660 000
Silesia	4 592 000	4 718 000
Total	9 620 000	9 758 000

Whereas the total number of the civilian population of the *Reich* (within the frontiers of 1937) in comparsion with the status in 1939 had decreased by many millions, owing to the number of men called up for military service, the number of the civil population in the *Reich* territory east of the Oder Neisse Line had even increased by 138 000 above the population in peace. This increase of population in Eastern Germany was chiefly caused by the influx of huge numbers of those evacuated, because of air raids from Central and Western Germany. The approximate number and distribution of these people can be calculated in accordance with the statistics of categories for consumers, which were kept during the war[15]).

Number and distribution of those evacuated because of air raids in Eastern Germany.

(February/March 1944)	
East Prussia	200 000
East Pomerania	100 000
East Brandenburg	75 000
Silesia	450 000
Oder-Neisse-Territories Total	825 000

The evacuees in Eastern Germany were involved in the happenings of the expulsion in just the same way as the original inhabitants. They suffered just as much, except for the fact that they were not robbed of their ancestral home like the East Germans. This is the reason, why they were not included in any statistics of the expellees.

Among the 9.7 million people of legal German nationality, who lived in the eastern German territories at the end of the war, there are included not only the small and genuine minorities of other ethnic descent, but also those groups of people, whose numbers cannot (or can in parts only) be counted as German speaking, but of whom a vast majority felt themselves Germans, unless they have to be regarded as of ambivalent nationality. This applies, for instance, to those Masurians in East Prussia, who had not yet been completely absorbed with regard to the language they spoke in the German nationality; it applies also to certain categories of Upper Silesians, who spoke a Polish vernacular. In all such cases the very complicated circumstances of language and ethnic descent do not permit indentification of national feeling with language. It is not yet possible to state adequately how these groups reacted during and after the Russian invasion. It is, however, certain that their presence was responsible for the very questionable basis of the Polish attempt to claim as "autochthonous" a million citizens of German legal nationality in Eastern Germany. In contrast it must be stated that in the eastern German territories (*Reich* frontiers of 1937) there was at the beginning of World War II only a total of 450 thousand people, who either did not speak German or spoke two languages[16]). Of these groups only about a quarter belonged to real national minorities, whereas the vast majority were German in regard to their political feelings[17]).

The number of Germans living at the end of the war east of the Oder Neisse Line, and who in consequence shared the fate of the expellees, would be very incomplete, if it did not include all those Germans whose home was not within the frontiers of Eastern Germany (according to their status of 31. December 1937). This includes particularly the almost entirely German population of Danzig and the numerous Germans from Memel, of whom a small part spoke Lithuanian. Just as in the case of the *Reich* Germans east of the Oder Neisse Line, there were also involved about 1.5 million people who were undoubtedly of German origin although they were living in the territory of the Polish State (frontiers of 1937). Particularly West Prussia and the *Reichsgau Wartheland,* which was formed after the German occupation, and the Polish part of Eastern Upper Silesia, had a numerous native German population. These had been increased during the war by the influx of re-settlers from the Baltic States, from Volhynia, from Bessarabia, from the Dobrudja, from the Bukovina and from the Gottschee. Also during the time of the German occupation some hundreds of thousands of Germans had immigrated from the *Reich* into Poland. These were partly persons, who had been driven out of these territories by the systematic Polish boycott after 1919[18]) and who returned after 1939. There were however also *Reich* Germans who came into the country in order to administer and carry on the economy of the Polish districts.

Number, distribution and composition of the German population of Danzig, the District of Memel and of those living in Poland according to the status of 1944[19]).

Territories with German population not within the frontiers of Eastern Germany of 31. December 1937	Original German population	Re-settlers	Germans from the *Reich*	Total
Danzig[20])	394 000	—	10 000	404 000
District of Memel[20])	129 000	—	5 000	134 000
Polish territories of the *Reichsgau* Danzig-West Prussia	210 000	57 000	40 000	307 000
Reichsgau Wartheland	230 000	250 000	194 000	674 000
Polish territories attached to the *Provinz* of East Prussia	31 000	8 000	26 000	65 000
Eastern Upper Silesia	238 000	38 000	100 000	376 000
Generalgouvernement	80 000	—	100 000	180 000
Total	1 312 000 (62%)	353 000 (16%)	475 000 (22%)	2 140 000 (100%)

From the fore-going statistics it is clear, that at the end of the war 9.75 million German citizens were living in the territories of the *Reich* east of the Oder Neisse Line (withhin the frontiers of 1937); they were with very few exceptions undoubtedly German in language as well as in descent. In addition to these, there were 2.14 million people of German origin in Danzig in the District of Memel and in Poland. This sums up to the fact, that over 11 million people to the east of the Oder Neisse Line because of their German origin had to suffer from the consequences of expulsion. This does not include about 1.5 million Eastern German men, who had been called up for military service. They of course, as far as they returned from the war, had been just as much deprived of their homes as their Eastern German compatriots who had gone bodily through the process of expulsion.

II. The situation in Eastern Germany in the autumn of 1944

1. Soviet troops at the frontiers of Eastern Germany

Until the summer of 1944, the Eastern German *Provinzes* were far off from the front. They scarcely suffered any air raids and seemed to be the safest territory of the *Reich*. The continual retreat of the Eastern front hardly affected the feeling of safety of the population, for the fighting was still hundreds of kilometres away from the Memel and the Vistula rivers.

This situation was basically changed after the beginning of the Great Offensive of the Russians on the 22. June 1944[21]).

Within a few weeks the numerically vastly superior Soviet armies passed through the vast area between the Dnieper and Vistula, they smashed up thirty German divisions and arrived very close to East Prussia. In the first days of August, advanced panzer caused a sudden flight of the population of the District of Memel; this flight, however, proved to have been too hasty, as the Russians troops had not passed the frontier of the *Reich* and were subsequently driven back. The operations in Poland came to an end, for the time being, when the Polish rebellion in Warsaw of September 1944 was suppressed. The front extended from the South to the North along the big bend of the Vistula to Warsaw and then followed the Narev, and continued to the east of Lyck, to the east of Schlossberg close along the East Prussian frontier over the Memel and then continued further in a northerly direction through Lithuania. East Prussia had now become the direct hinterland of the front. Also the industrial territory of Upper Silesia, which was so very important for the German war industry, was then only 150 kilometres from the Vistula front.

The success of the Russian attack was the more serious because in addition to the western territories of Russia, it also tore away a great amount of Eastern Poland from German control. The Russian troops could, therefore. rely on the active participation of the Poles in the future fighting. As soon as the Soviet troops had occupied Eastern Poland, the "Polish Committee for National Liberation" took over the government (22. July 1944) in the part of Poland which had been liberated. Four days later, this committee concluded an agreement with the Soviet Commander; Poland engaged to render all help possible for the purpose of fighting the Germans[22]). The Polish forces were considerably increased by the recruiting of soldiers and by the union of partisans from Eastern Poland with Polish divisions, which had been fighting on the Russian side since the autumn of 1943.

The Polish Liberation Committee, which had constituted itself on the 31. December 1944 as the "Provisional Government of the Polish Republic", consisted exclusively of Polish communists, who had belonged during the war to the "Union of Polish Patriots" in the Soviet Union. The refounding of the Polish State amounted to a political success for the Soviet Union and this was to have far reaching results.

2. German defence measures and evacuation plans in the Eastern Provinces

The immediate threat to Eastern Germany, owing to the Soviet advance to the Vistula and to the East Prussian frontier, led to desperate measures on the part of the German political leaders. The whole military situation in the autumn of 1944 was hopeless as the result of the advance of the Western Allies to the German West frontier, the retreat of the German armies in Italy, and the most serious losses on the South Eastern Front. Nevertheless, the politicians pretended that they could ward off the fatal result once more by calling the whole German people to arms. In addition to this misunderstanding of the situation Hitler after the attempt of the 20. July 1944, most persistently imagined that the military defeats were caused by the sabotage of his generals. His delusion was consciously encouraged by his political confidants. Therefore Hitler issued an order on the 25. July 1944, making Goebbels *Reichsbevollmächtigter für den totalen Kriegseinsatz* (*Reich* plenipotentiary for the waging of total war) and subjecting the whole of the organization of State and Economy in an increased degree to the control of assignees of the Party. In addition to Goebbels, these were chiefly the *Gauleiters,* who had already been also *Reich* Defense Commissioners since the 16. November 1942; their powers were now extended to deal also directly with questions of military defense. These men, who were not professional soldiers, were entrusted with the further building of fortifications in the eastern *Provinzes,* and in addition to that, by an order of Hitler of the 18. October 1944, with the establishment and leading of the *Volkssturm.*

In July 1944 the whole of the male population of East Prussia, which was capable of working, was called up for the building of an Eastern Line of fortification. These included farmers, farm-labourers and also those who up to then had been exempted from military service, because they were indispensable for civil work. Men up to 65 years of age, and in addition foreign workers, were mobilized as digging columns by the District Organization of the Party They were sent, during the summer and autumn of 1944, for three or four weeks to the eastern frontier of East Prussia and behind the Narev front where they had to make panzer trenches, fox holes and bunkers. The supreme command over the building of the whole Eastern Line of fortification from the Memel to Warsaw was entrusted to the extremely ambitious and brutal *Gauleiter* and *Reich* Defense Commissioner[23]) of Eastern Prussia, Erich Koch.

In the territory of the *Generalgouvernement* and of the *Reichsgau Wartheland* extensive entrenchments were also built. Two echelonned lines of trenches were established by German and Polish workers, the first row along a line between Leslau ,Kutno and Wielun, and a row further back along a line between Kolmar, Posen and Lissa. Further fortifications were built in accordance with the "Barthold Enterprise" along the old frontier, between Poland and Silesia, and some of the Silesian population were called up for this purpose[24]). Likewise work on entrenchements was ordered for the civil population part of the *Reichsgau* Danzig-West Prussia to the east of the Vistula and near the old Pomeranian and Obra line, which extended along the eastern frontier of Pomerania and Brandenburg[25]). The military commanders of the different sections of the front had only advisory functions in this work of which the *Reich* Defense Commissioners were in charge. This resulted on the one hand in great differences of opinion, and on the other hand in the building of fortifications which were from a military point of view useless or tactically unsuitable. The whole building of the eastern line of defense appears to us today to have been one of the most desperate and in the last analysis useless efforts made during the last months of the war. All the more so as the troops necessary to man these entrenchments were almost everywhere lacking.

The same applies also to the establishment of the *Volkssturm.* It was set up as a consequence of the proclamation of total war after the 20. July. It had been originally proposed to Hitler by General Guderian, who was Chief of the Army Staff. However, the carrying out of the idea soon passed over to the Party, in which the East Prussian *Gauleiter* was its chief champion.

In October 1944 Goebbels proclaimed the establishment of the *Volkssturm* throughout the *Reich.* All males between 16 and 65 years of age were called up for service, and even if they had been previously excused from military service, on the grounds of doing indispensable war work, or because they were physically unfit for service. The *Gauleiters* and *Kreisleiters* were in charge of the establishment of this quasi-military organization. *Volkssturm* units were first of all formed in East Prussia, but as early as autumn 1944 also in all the other *Provinzes* of the *Reich.* Their military value proved to be very insignificant, and particularly in the East of the *Reich* the calling up of these men deprived the civil population, who fled before the Red Army, of practically any help from males, and this increased their helplessness, their losses and their sufferings.

In fact the conduct of the authorities, in regard to the evacuation, was much more important for the future of the East Prussian population than the measures of defense. The Party was very much handicapped in helping to draw up plans of evacuation, because the members had to avoid doing anything harmful to the violent propaganda which was still being carried on, to keep the population still believing in victory. Moreover with inconceivable obstinacy and blindness the Party functionaries ignored the real dangers, and believed or pretended to believe in the repeated announcements, that the military situation of Germany would change for the better. However, mostly on the initiative of civil authorities, the governors of districts, *Landräte* and mayors, in the summer of 1944 serious considerations were entered upon with regard to the civil population, in case the Soviet Armies succeeded in breaking into the east *Provinzes* of the *Reich.*

The measures discussed were indeed inadequate and influenced by propaganda, but in one point they were absolutely justified, in as much as they indicated that an invasion of German territory by the Soviet troops would cause the most terrible suffering for the civil population, and that flight or evacuation would be the only chance of salvation. In this regard governors of districts, *Landräte* and mayors agreed with the Party, though in many other respects they resisted being put under tutelage. Further the commanders of the armed services categorically supported the demand that the civilian population be evacuated from the endangered districts, for they knew by experience what would happen to them, if they fell into the hands of the victorious Russian troops.

The difference in the conduct of the various responsible authorities was only that both administrative departments and military commanders insisted sooner and more energetically on preparations for evacuating the civilian population, than *Gauleiters* and *Kreisleiters* who delayed these for reasons of prestige. Unfortunately the political leaders of the Party were the absolute authority in matters of evacuation, and jealously insisted on the literal carrying out of their orders.

However, there was, in dealing with questions of evacuation, little or no unanimity even among the *Gauleiters* responsible for this task. When a plan for evacuating the population of East Prussia was put before Koch by the *Oberpräsidium* of Königsberg, in the summer of 1944, the *Gauleiter* refused to pass it on even as a mere secret instruction to the administrative and party authorities of East Prussia.

On the other hand in the *Reichsgau Wartheland* and in the *Reichsgau* Danzig-West Prussia, also in Silesia and in Pomerania detailed plans of evacuation had been drawn up, since July and August 1944, and secret instructions had been issued for the case of an emergency: It is, however, true that the significance of a great attack by the Russians was completely underestimated. Especially the idea as to the time necessary for an evacuation was very erroneous.

Further these plans applied mostly only to the country immediately behind the fighting front, and, in many cases, provided for reception territories for the evacuees, which became quickly a fighting zone in the course of the Soviet advance. Thus in the course of the Russian offensive in January 1945 all these plans became obsolete and the preparations proved to be absolutely inadequate.

On the whole the command of the *Gauleiters* and *Kreisleiters* proved also afterwards to be a handicap rather than a help. Although in a few cases the personal initiative and prudence of individual Party leaders succeeded in preventing the flight developing into chaos, and in alleviating the sufferings of the refugees by providing food and accomodation[26]), nevertheless the compulsion of Party orders almost everywhere prevented the flight of the population from starting in time[27]).

3. The first Soviet attacks on East Prussia and the flight of a part of the population in the autumn of 1944

In the course of the Russian efforts to encircle the German Army Group North, which operated in the Baltic *Provinzes* from the River Memel to Lake Peipus, the Russian army broke for the first time, into the district of Memel at the beginning of October 1944[28]). On 5. October Russian attacks started south of Schaulen against Memel and Tilsit. On 10. October the town of Memel was encircled, and the Army Group North was cut off from its land connection with the *Reich,* when the Soviet forces broke through to the Baltic Sea between Memel and Libau. The whole of the northern half of the district of Memel was lost, although the German troops were able to maintain an extensive bridge-head, on the other side of the Memel opposite to Tilsit.

A few days later on 16. October a massed Russian attack began which aimed at the interior of East Prussia. This attack was carried out along the fighting front, which was about 140 kilometer wide, along the eastern frontier of East Prussia[29]).

The Russians succeeded on the 19th of October in making a deep breach between Ebenrode and the Rominter Heide, and on 22. October they had advanced south of Gumbinnen, as far as the river Angerapp and were already threatening the town of Gumbinnen. On 23. October Ebenrode, which was in the north section of the Russian breach, and Goldap in the south were both taken by them. Also the south of the district of Memel had to be given up, and the German troops retreated behind the river Memel. For the time being the Red Army did not succeed in advancing further into East Prussia.

At the end of October and in the beginning of November the Germans made flank attacks and destroyed the head of the Russian attack. They drove the Russians back from the river Angerapp and freed the town of Goldap on 5. November, but they could not prevent a part of the East Prussian districts of Schlossberg, Gumbinnen, Goldap, the whole district of Ebenrode and the Memel district from remaining in the hands of the Russians.

In spite of the procrastination of the Party offices responsible for the evacuation, the majority of the population very fortunately got out of these districts in time. In the case of the Memel district things did not go so well.

The order to evacuate the Memel district was not issued until 2 days after the beginning of the Soviet attack of the 5. October. Parts of the population were already fleeing, others continued working without any idea of what was happening. After the Russians had reached the *Haff* to the south of the town of Memel, it was impossible for the population to leave the northern part of the district of Memel by land. Only those who had already taken refuge in the town of Memel were able to escape to the *Kurische Nehrung,* and this happened whilst the town of Memel was actually being encircled, during the months of October 1944 and January 1945. The population of the more southern parts of the Memel district proceeded along the coast of the *Haff* to the Windenburg peninsula, from there thousands of them were ferried over to the *Kurische Nehrung* and to the district of the Elch-Niederung[30]). Others tried to get over the river Memel and to go in the direction of Tilsit, but, in trying this, many of the refugees were caught by the Russians[31]). At least 30 000 people, that is to say almost a quarter of the entire population of the Memel district, either did not attempt to flee, or in doing so fell into the hands of the Russians; among these there were both German and Lithuanian speaking people. The *Reich* Defense Commissioner was a failure not only in the Memel district, but also when the Russians advanced to the river Angerapp, and this although he was responsible for the evacuation. When General Hossbach, the Commander of the 4. Army saw that a Russian attack was pending, he demanded without delay the evacuation of the civilian population from the eastern districts. The order to evacuate did not come, until a part of these districts had already been occupied by the Russians. Meanwhile the evacuation had already begun against the will of the *Gauleiter;* this was merely due to the collaboration between military commanders and the Governor of the Government district of Gumbinnen, and also to the initiative of the people[32]). The cases in which this did not happen or was done too late showed what the Germans had to expect from the Russian troops.

On the 20. October Russian tanks drove into the trekking refugees, to the south of Gumbinnen near Grosswaltersdorf on the Rominte and Nemmersdorf on the Angerapp. The Russians committed terrible atrocities. These atrocities were particularly important, because, when these parts were recaptured by the Germans, they became generally known, thus causing terror of the Red Army and urging the population to flee.

The Russian advance to the river Angerapp caused almost the whole population of the Government district of Gumbinnen to flee. The town and district of Insterburg were in the midst of this trekking. Large portions of the population fled to the West not only from the territory already occupied by the Russians, but also from the district of Lyck, Treuburg, Angerburg, Angerapp, Insterburg, Tilsit-Ragnit and Elch-Niederung.

After the situation became more stable at the end of October and the Russian breach was closed, the *Gauleiter* Headquarters seemed to have learned something from the mistakes already committed, and in accordance with the demands of the military and civil administative authorities, issued an order for a zone about 30 kilometers wide behind the fighting front to be evacuated by the civilian population. The evacuation border from north to south followed approximately a line from Elchwerder on the *Kurisches Haff,* past Kreuzingen, Insterburg, Angerburg to Lyck. The territory to be evacuated included, with the exception of the eastern part of the district of Insterburg and Angerapp, the whole area of the government district of Gumbinnen[33]), and also the eastern half of the district of Lyck which was under the administration of Allenstein, that is to say about 30 % of the area of the *Provinz* of East Prussia.

Over 600 000 people living in this territory had to leave their homes in October 1944, that is to say about 25 % of the whole population of East Prussia. The majority of the town and other non-rural population, also women with small children, aged and sick people were evacuated to Saxony, Thuringia and Pomerania; the rural population which was on the trek with cattle and carts came to the more western districts of East Prussia. A definite reception district was ordered for each of the districts evacuated, and this reception district had not only to accomodate the evacuated people but also cattle and other movable property.

As the means of accomodation in the reception districts were not adequate, it soon became necessary to transport large portions of the population of East Prussia to the interior of the *Reich;* many went voluntarily to relatives there. The events of October 1944 caused a great feeling of uneasiness among the population of East Prussia, in a degree not yet prevailing in the other eastern territories of the *Reich*.

The result was that, in addition to the evacuation from the government district of Gumbinnen, an inofficial exodus began out of other East Prussian territory, and all the threats of the *Gauleiter* were of no avail. Tens of thousands from the government districts of Königsberg and Allenstein went out, along with the refugees from the evacuated zone in the east of the *Provinz;* these were in particular bombed out people from Berlin and West Germany living in East Prussia, and also women and children, and many other people who did not need to remain in East Prussia in order to follow their occupation.

In March 1944 there were 2,346 000 people in East Prussia[34]), but at the end of the year 1944 there were only 1,754 000 people in the territory still occupied by the German forces[35]). About half a million people had left East Prussia under the pressure of the Red Army before the Russian offensive of January 1945. These people had emigrated to the more western *Provinzes* of the *Reich*. On the other hand about 100 000 people had fallen into the hands of the Soviet troops in the Memel territory and the government district of Gumbinnen.

Those East Prussian refugees who were in Pomerania and East Brandenburg were destined to become later victims of the events connected with the Russian advance and the Russo-Polish administration, to be introduced for the inhabitants of the territory to the east of the Oder and Neisse.

III. Survey of the military operations and the trekking in the Provinzes to the east of the Oder and Neisse from January 1945 [36])

After the conclusion of the Soviet summer offensive which extended to the river Vistula and after the end of the fighting in East Prussia in October 1944, the fronts there and in Poland remained quite stable until January 1945. However, from day to day a fresh offensive of the Soviets had to be reckoned with.

In spite of this fact several German divisions were withdrawn from East Prussia and the Vistula front, during the winter of 1944/45 and transferred partly to Hungary and partly to the Rhine front[37]), from which latter the German Ardennes offensive started. Thus the German forces at the eastern front were further weakened, and there were practically no good combatant reserves, behind the sparsely manned front, which could be put into action in the event of a breakthrough.

At the beginning of January 1945 the German army command headquarters ascertained that there were Russian forces in the three Vistula bridgeheads of Baranow, Pulavy and Magnuseff which outnumbered the German forces by more than 10 to 1, and that they were preparing to attack.

Urgent application was made to Hitler's headquarters for re-inforcements[38]), but none were sent. It, therefore, became evident that the pending Russian attack would lead to a catastrophe and involve the civilian population in the resulting confusion.

The fierce fighting on all the fronts of World War 2 had rendered it necessary to provide for the evacuation of the civilian population and had everywhere led to the trekking of refugees, but the experience of the first advance of the Soviet troops into East Prussia had proved how necessary it was, for the east German population to withdraw from the dangers threatening. Their only chance was to get out of reach of the Red Army in time. The possibility of escaping would entirely depend upon the speed and direction of the Russian advance, and this would vary in the different fields of operation.

The military operations were to a large extent decisive for the roads to be used for trekking, for its direction and for crises arising in the course of the flight. It is necessary to know the course of the Soviet advance into east Germany, in order to give a survey of the chief roads used for trekking and of the development of the flight in the different areas of operation[39]).

The Russian offensive began from 12. to 15. January along the whole front from the river Memel to the upper Vistula; there were slight differences in the timing of the thrust from the different starting points.

On 12. January the troops of the 1. Ukrainian front (Konieff) advanced from the Baranoff bridge-head in the direction of Silesia; on the 13. January followed the attack of the 1. White Russian Front (Shukoff); the latter started from the Vistula bridge-heads of Magnuseff and Pulavy and made a frontal thrust by way of Lodz and Kalisch against the central part of the Oder. Two other thrusts aimed at isolating East Prussia: The attack of the 3. White Russian Front (Chernakovski) in the direction of Königsberg on 13. January, and two days later on 15. January the thrust of the 2. White Russian Front (Rokossovski) from the Nareff bridge-head Pultusk by way of Ciechenoff and Soldau; this latter attack was aimed at Thorn and Elbing and intended to separate East Prussia from the *Reich*.

These Soviet attacks which were carried out with enormous masses of troops and material were very successful in the course of only a few days. The position of the German defense became most serious in the great bend of the river Vistula and in the neighbourhood of Warsaw. On the very first day deep breaches were effected, and on 15. January there was no longer a coherent German front here. In the southern part of the Vistula front breaches and out-flanking movements could only be prevented, by withdrawing the German troops westwards, as the superior Soviet forces advanced; in this way some kind of a front could be maintained. On 18. January the armies of Shukoff and Konieff were advancing swiftly along a line between Plock, Lodz, Chenstochau and Cracow. Hemmed in between these two armies were German forces which were trying to break out to the west. On 20. January Russian troops passed the *Altreich* frontier east of Breslau, and came close to the Upper Silesian industrial country. On

23. January they reached the river Oder at Brieg and on 28. January at Steinau north of Breslau.

In the *Reichsgau Wartheland* the towns of Wreschen and Gnesen were occupied by the Russians at this time. The fortress of Posen was encircled on 25. January, and capitulated on 23. February. The forces of Shukoff continued pressing forward to the west. Their vanguard soon passed by on both sides of the Obra-line, and reached the river Oder at Fürstenberg and Küstrin, during the last days of January. On 2./3. February the whole of East Brandenburg was already occupied by Russian troops.

In the shortest conceivable time the Soviet armies had advanced from the great bend in the river Vistula to the middle course of the river Oder, and had driven the German troops and the fleeing population out of the *Reichsgau Wartheland* and East Brandenburg. As a result of the swiftness of the Russian advance many columns of refugees were run down on their way to the west. Only those were temporarily in safety who got over the river Oder in time, because the front stopped at the middle course of the Oder until April.

Meanwhile the strategic decision had been made also in East Prussia. The attack which had begun on 13. January between Ebenrode and Schlossberg led on 18. Januray to a breach, extending as far as the river Inster; this compelled all German troops north of the breach to retreat behind the river Deime. On 22. January the town of Insterburg was captured, and by 25. January all East Prussian districts, to the west of a line marked by the river Deime, the Masurian Canal and the Masurian Lakes were occupied by the Russians.

The Soviet attack from the Nareff bridge-head at Pultusk had the same success. By 19. January Chiechenoff and Soldau had been taken by Russian troops, and they crossed the East Prussian frontier in the Neidenburg district. On the same day the first Soviet forces reached the district of Ortelsburg and Osterode and continued their advance in the direction of the towns of Allenstein and Elbing. On 21. January the town of Allenstein was taken and on 23. January Mohrungen; on this latter date Russian panzer got into Elbing temporarily, but the town was not actually occupied until 9. February, after hard fighting. The Russians had already reached the *Frisches Haff* by 26. January at Tolkemit, and thus broken the railway and land connection between East Prussia and the *Reich*.

Only a small portion of the East Prussian refugees had succeeded in crossing the river Vistula on their way westwards, before East Prussia was encircled. Further trekking in the direction of West Prussia was no longer possible. Samland with the harbour of Pillau, and particularly the frozen *Frisches Haff* together with the *Nehrung* which afforded a last connection with the West, were the only ways of exit for the treks which were still in the central part of East Prussia.

The defense line on the river Deime and to the east of Königsberg had to be given up on 26. January, and the Russians could now advance into Samland and by 31. January encircled Königsberg. Meanwhile the 4. Army under General Hossbach had left its entrenchments along the Masurian Lakes, by forced marches. This was done, in order to deliver an attack westwards, and break through the ring round East Prussia and to re-establish contact with the German troops which were to the west of the river Vistula. The operation was carried out in defiance of Hitler's headquarters. Although this bold effort had had initial success it came to an end on 26. January, with the removal of Hossbach from his command.

On 30. January the occupation of East Prussian territory had made great progress, owing to the concentric Russian attacks from the east, the south and the west. The line occupied by the German troops at this time ran from Tolkemit on the *Frisches Haff* south east to Wormditt, then bent to the east and followed the river Alle past Heilsberg to Bartenstein; it then went back north-west, as far as Brandenburg near Königsberg, right up to the *Frisches Haff* and afterwards continued in the siege ring round Königsberg.

In this hose,shaped pocket, with its ends on the *Frisches Haff* and with the districts of Braunsberg and Heiligenbeil in its centre, there were hundreds of thousands of East Prussian refugees packed together. These endless columns began to pass over the frozen *Frisches Haff* at the danger of their lives. Next to the pocket and to the south of the *Frisches Haff* the town of Königsberg, West Samland with Neukuhren, Rauschen, Pillau and Fischhausen were still occupied by the Germans. Here also numberless refugees had gathered.

These last German strongholds in East Prussia were fiercely defended during the following months, in order to gain time for the removal of the civilian population, by way of the bay and of the seaport of Pillau. The last German troops crowded together on the peninsula of Balga did not leave the Heilsberg pocket until 25. March, they then withdrew across the *Haff*. On 9. April Königsberg was taken and on 25. April Pillau, but German troops held out on the *Frische Nehrung* until the armistice on 9. May.

There was a further splitting up of the German front, and congestion of German troops and refugees in other pockets in the more distant territory on the Baltic, Danzig and in Pomerania. The same Russian thrust, which with its right wing put a grip on Soldau, Osterode and Elbing directed its left wing along the north bank of the river Vistula towards the West. Thorn was encircled on 23. January but held out until the thirtieth of the month. The Russians had already taken Bromberg on 27. January, and Soviet panzer soon reached the fortress of Graudenz, which was, however, obstinately defended until the beginning of March. Marienburg was reached at about the same time as Elbing, thus the Nogat-Vistula-Line from Elbing to Graudenz was occupied by the Russians by the end of January.

At Graudenz the front made a bend over the river Vistula towards the east. Schneidemühl was encircled at the end of January, and capitulated on 14. February. There then followed the first break of the Red Army into the south Pomeranian districts of Flatow, Deutsch Krone, Friedeberg, Arnswalde, Pyritz and Greifenhagen. The Soviets then attempted to reach Stettin and the estuary of the Oder, but these attempts were defeated by the German defense.

During the whole month of February the front in Pomerania and West Prussia remained, with few changes, at a halt about 50 kilometers north of the Warthe Netze line. The estuary of the Vistula, Danzig and the northern district of West Prussia, as also of East Pomerania, continued to be a refuge for the German troops and masses of people coming by way of the *Frisches Haff* and the *Frische Nehrung* from East Prussia, from the south of West Prussia and from Polish territory. Not until March did Pomerania begin to be split up, and then from the south. On 1. March Russian troops pushed through near Köslin to the Baltic coast, and thus blocked the way for the refugees, in the neighbourhood of Danzig and in the eastern districts of Pomerania, who were making for the west. They were thus compelled to turn back eastwards where there was a possibility of escaping by the harbours of Danzig and Gdingen.

At the beginning of March flight and retreat over the river Oder to the West was becoming continually more difficult for the refugees, and also for German troops who were in the western half of East Pomerania. On 10. March all roads to the West were finally closed. There remained only the town of Kolberg which afforded a last refuge, from which numerous refugees and troops could be brought to the West in ships. This town, however, was taken by the Russians on 18. March after a 14 days siege. Gdingen and Danzig, which were completely encircled had to surrender on 27. March, and there was nowhere, with the exception of the Vistula estuary at Schiewenhorst and the tongue of land of Hela, where the enemy was not in occupation. Just as in the case of the *Frische Nehrung* in East Prussia, these two places could hold out until the capitulation of Germany, because they were so well protected by nature. They were used as the last starting point for sea transport to Rügen, Kiel or Denmark.

We will now turn our attention to Silesia. Here the Soviet attacks on Brieg and Steina had been laterally so extended, that by the end of January all Silesian territory, to the east of the Oder, was in the hands of the Russians The Russians had, moreover, succeeded in forming bridge-heads on the west bank of the Oder near Brieg and Steinau. Oppeln had also been taken on 26. January. There was only one German bridge-head at Glogau in Lower Silesia, which was still holding out to the east of the Oder. In Upper Silesia there was still heavy fighting going on for part of the industrial district to the east of the Oder, and that, although the centre of this area, along with the towns of Beuthen, Gleiwitz, Hindenburg and Kattowitz, had been already lost at the end of January.

The last German troops, which were still in the industrial district of Upper Silesia, had to retreat on 10. February behind the Oder, aftere three weeks fighting. Here they fought doggedly, until the beginning of April, in an attempt to defend the industrial district of Mährisch-Ostrau.

On 8. February the Soviet divisions in Lower Silesia on the Oder began a new advance to the West. They started from the Steinau bridge-head, crossed the Oder to the north of Glogau, and, after hard fighting and German counter-attacks at the Bober, reached the Neisse at Görlitz. On 25. February the German troops retreated behind the Neisse between Guben to the north and Penzig to the south; only around Görlitz a German bridge-head was maintained. In the course of this Russian attack Liegnitz was surrendered on 10. February, practically without fighting and Glogau was encircled on 12. February. Simultaneously with the advance to the Neisse, the Red Army began a pincers action, on 12. February, starting from the Steinau and Brieg bridge-heads. This brought about the encirclement of Breslau on 16. February, after hard fighting. In the middle of February Jauer, Striegau and Schweidnitz were also taken by the Russians.

An attempt to cross the Neisse at Görlitz and to march into Saxony was defeated, in the panzer battle of Lauban on 3/4. March, but the situation existing in Silesia since the middle of February changed only very little. Glogau held out until the end of March and Breslau did not surrender until 6. May, or two days before the capitulation of Germany.

At the beginning of March the front extended from Ratibor to Oppeln along the west bank of the Oder, and from there past Strehlen, Striegau and Lauban as far as the Neisse at Görlitz. In the second half of March the part of Upper Silesia to the west of the Oder was almost entirely occupied by the Russians. The Germans retained, until just before the armistice, only a broad strip of land right through Silesia, parallel to the mountain chain, which formed the frontier between Bohemia and Silesia.

The flight of the Silesian population took place in two main directions, according to the geographical situation of the country and to the fighting: either in a westerly direction along the main roads into Saxony or in a southerly direction to the mountain chain, which could be reached quite easily from all parts of Silesia, or over the mountains into Bohemia and Moravia.

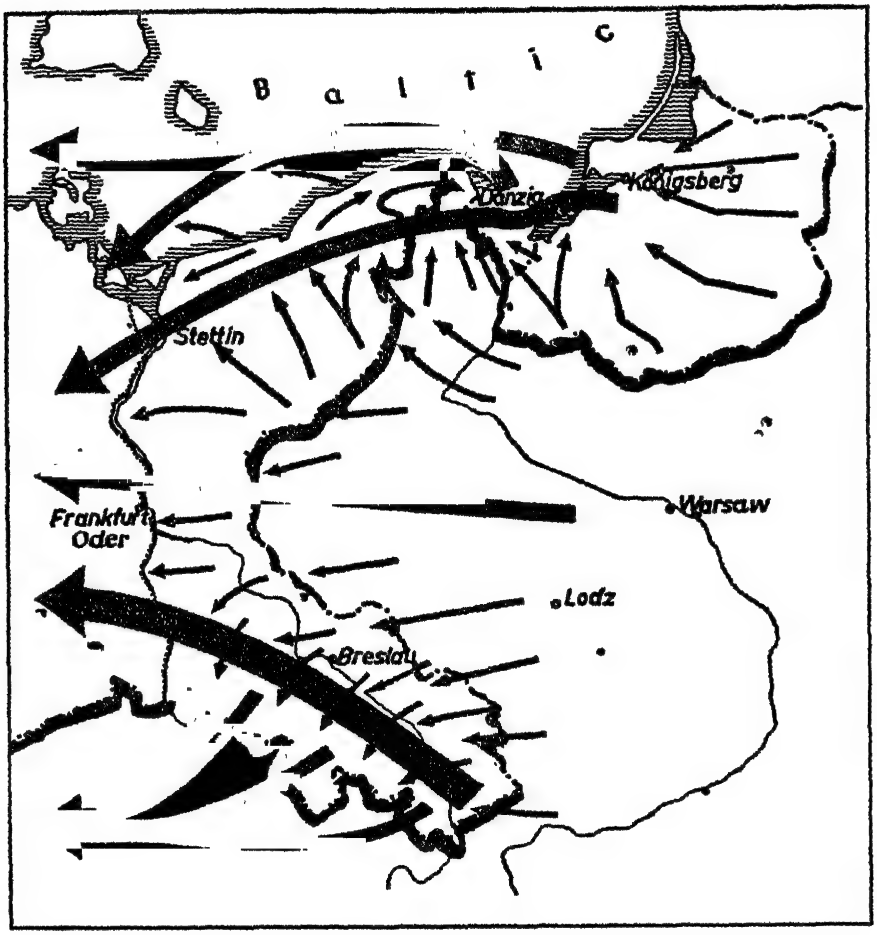
In all the territory to the east of the Oder and Neisse which was inhabited by Germans the fighting was practically finished by the end of March. The whole territory was occupied by Russian troops, with the exception of a few harbours, tongues of land, fortified towns and mountainous parts. The chief military operations, and, therefore, also the chief trekking took place from the middle of January to the end of March 1945. Particularly during this period and in the weeks following millions of Germans poured from the east over the Oder and Neisse into the central and western parts of the *Reich* and also over the *Altreich frontier* into Bohemia or Moravia, or even by sea into West German or Danish seaports. The adjacent diagram of the trekking is intended to illustrate this migration of the population from East to West.

IV. The flight of the East German population before the Red Army

1. General remarks

The flight of the East German population before the Red Army is the first stage in the expulsion of over 10 million East Germans into Central and West Germany. This began during the last months of the war. According

The ways of flight of the East German population during the advance of the Red Army to the Oder and Neisse
(January—April 1945)


Baltic
Königsberg
Danzig
Stettin
Warsaw
Frankfurt Oder
Lodz
Breslau

= *General directions and chief ways of flight.*

= *Local flights caused by the different phases in the advance of the Red Army.*

to the decisions arrived at in Potsdam the expulsion was recognized by the victorious Powers as part of their program, and the expulsion was continued during the following years, until completed according to this program.

About a half of all these Germans from East Prussia, East Pomerania, East Brandenburg, Silesia and Poland, fled during this period from their ancestral homes in East Germany over what was to be known later as the Oder-Neisse Line. They are now living as expellees in West Germany.

This migration of about 5 million Germans from east to west was in the first instance nothing else but one of the shiftings of the population, within Germany, which had been caused by the war[10]), and of which there had already been several. One and a half million people had been evacuated from Berlin or voluntarily left the city owing to air raids. At the end of 1944 about 2 million less people (or 25 % of the population) than in 1939 were living in the Rhine *Province*[11]). This was due to the fact that these parts were particularly subject to air raids, and that the western front was getting nearer.

The flight of the East German population to the interior of the *Reich* was, however, different from the other migrations, because it happened with great suddeness, owing to the quickness of the advance of the Russian troops, and this led to a number of great catastrophes. Also the numbers who fled from the east were far greater. And this was because the terror caused by the Soviet armies was far greater than the fear of the Anglo-American occupation or even of air raids. Apart from this terror, the evacuation or flight of the East German population was in principle not different from the multitude of small and big migrations within Germany, caused by military measures and fighting. Of this process a reversal could certainly be expected at the end of the war.

As the flight of the East German population is frequently regarded to-day as nothing but the introduction to and the first stage of the expulsion which was to follow, it is necessary to emphasize that, when the refugees fled before the Red Army, they never even dreamt that this was to be a final separation from their ancestral homes. They regarded it as a matter of course. that this departure from their endangered homes was merely temporary, and, like every other evacuation within Germany caused by the war, was merely an emergency measure which would be revoked at the termination of hostilities.

No one in Germany imagined that the Polish Government in exile and the Allies had already agreed to transfer large portions of East Germany to Poland and to remove the Germans there from their homes, in fact that the flight was to facilitate the expulsion work of the Poles, and was merely a preparation for it.

The decision at the confereces of Yalta and Potsdam, that the flight of the Germans showed that they were agreed to give up their homes and that the subsequent expulsion was thus justified, was a fatal argument and could only appear a piece of unwarranted cynicism in the eyes of the East Germans.

The flight of 5 millions of Germans from east to west was only construed into something other than a temporary migration caused by war, when the

Allies definitely formulated their decision for the expulsion, during their negotiations at Potsdam in July/August 1945. It was only when the Allies decided upon the expulsion also of those Germans, who had remained in East Germany, that the return of the East Germans to their homes which had already begun, ceased[42]) and that the migration to the West became final.

Now that they had been deprived of the right to return to and to live in their own homes, the refugees from East Prussia, East Pomerania, East Brandenburg and Silesia had become in the true sense of the word "expellees". For this reason the flight must historically be regarded as a part of the whole process of expulsion in spite of the fact that it was a concomitant phase of the war.

The causes of the flood of refugees out of East Germany, during the first months of 1945, were far more serious and cogent, than in the case of other evacuations and flights of the civil population in the first or second World Wars. It was not only necessary to get away from the front and fighting, but also to escape from an enemy who had no mercy for the civilian population, but who was unbridled and brutal in his plundering, in his raping of women and arbitrary shooting of civilians, thousands of whom he herded together, like cattle in temporary camps and then deported them to the east, as slave workers. The Russian soldiers had been goaded on by their superiors to take in East Prussia revenge on the Germans and to plunder them. In the autumn of 1944 and earlier in the Baltic countries, the Germans had had a foretaste of such things For these reasons practically the whole eastern population fled from the Soviet troops.

It ist true that the Party loudly published the atrocities for their own reasons, particularly to stiffen the backs of the people to resist, but apart from this the East Germans were unanimous in their conviction, that they had to expect the very worst from the Soviet troops.

The East German population began its flight, although from January to March 1945 there was a most severe winter in all the East German *Provinzes*, and they must expect to be frozen to death or to suffer the greatest hardships on icy and snow-bound roads and ways.

Furthermore, the suddenness of the Russian advance and the lack of adequate transport made it impossible for the refugees to take more than absolutely indispensable commodities and victuals with them. The greatest part of what they possessed at home had to be left behind, particularly much cattle, which amounted to losing it altogether.

Furthermore, the chance of escaping was in many places already very small, because the Russian tanks were quicker than the treks of refugees, and there was the continual danger of being encircled or getting into the midst of battles on the roads. Also the absence of the men, who had been called up for military service, made things much worse for the civilian population in their hour of need.

The great number of acts of desperation and of suicides, even before the Russian troops came, show in what terror the people were of the dangers of the flight, and of the inconceivable torments threatening from the Red Army.

In this terrible extremity the overwhelming majority of the German population to the east of the Oder and Neisse rivers decided to flee, for any hesitation was far outweighed by the fear of the fighting and of the excesses to be expected at the hands of the Soviet troops.

The official orders for evacuation were often fruitless, because the flight began in a panic, when the Red Army merely appeared. A controlled evacuation was generally impossible or began too late. The authorities responsilbe for the evacuation were unable to prevent precipitate and wild flights. The organizations actually entrusted with conducting the evacuation were often unable to guide and look after the suddenly swelling stream of refugees, and this, in spite of the most devoted self-sacrifice, as was especially the case with the National Socialist People's Welfare Organization (NSV) and with District and Local Farm Leaders.

The command of the Party in measures of evacuation was in general a disadvantage, but did not mean, that the flight or evacuation had been carried out against the will of the population. This is evident from the fact that the population fled, even when no order had been issued to do so. The compulsory nature of the evacuation arising from the orders of the Party had only to do with the dates for evacuating, as ordered by the *Gauleiters* and *Kreisleiters,* but not with the flight as such. This irresponsibilty of Party measures did not lie in the fact that evacuation orders were issued, but that, as a result of the inability of the Party to appreciate the real situation, this was generally done too late, the result being that the flight began also too late, and this might make it impossible for portions of the population to escape

It is true that the refugees, when they were on the flight, could not know what would individually happen to them, if they remained behind, under the Russians, but what actually did happen to those who did remain behind. or did not succeed in fleeing, showed that the flight was by far the less evil. in comparison with what happened after 1945 to those Germans who had not fled. Numberless people were spared a much worse fate by fleeing, for the losses during the flight, terrible as they were, could not be compared with the greater losses and sufferings of those who had remained behind and fallen into the power of the Russians and Poles.

2. The course of the flight in the different areas of operations to the east of the Oder and Neisse

a) The flight of the German population out of West Polish territory13) and East Brandenburg

The approximately 100 000 square kilometers of territory, bounded on the north by the rivers Warthe, Netze and Vistula, on the east by the great bend of the Vistula, on the south by the Upper Vistula and the frontier between Silesia and Poland, and on the west by the middle course of the

Oder, was a homogeneous area of operation in the plan of attack for the great Russian offensive of January 1945. It was the scene of the Russian frontal attack, which, with enormous speed, swept over the 400 kilometers from the bend in the Vistula to the middle course of the Oder in 18 days. From within this territory, which in its outer contours became narrower towards the west, the Red Army drove a wedge right into the middle of the *Reich*. On the other hand there were formed on both flanks in East and West Prussia, in Pomerania and Silesia independent fronts and strategic areas, where the fighting continued for months.

Just as in the case of the operations the flight of the civilian population from this area differed from that in the rest of the eastern territory, in as much as it was practically finished by the end of January. Whereas the trekking of the East Prussian and Silesian population lasted four months, the flight of the Germans from the then *Generalgouvernement*, from the *Reichsgau Wartheland* and from East Brandenburg was finished within fourteen days.

Although the area of this territory is almost twice that of East Prussia, the number of the German population was comparatively small, and amounted to approximately only 1,400 000. The small territory of East Brandenburg hat 640 000, the *Reichsgau Wartheland* 670 000 und the western half of the *Generalgouvernement* about 90 000[41]). Apart from East Brandenburg the population of which was solely German, the German population was in the minority. It was most dense in the western half of the *Reichsgau Wartheland* in the area of the old *Provinz* of Posen, and particularly in the parts immediately adjacent to the *Altreich* frontier of 1937. Here the German population was about 30 % of the whole.

To the east of the town of Hohensalza and Kalisch the German population was less dense. There was only in the region of Lodz a large German minority, here there were more than 100 000 Germans, Elsewhere the proportion of German population (increased by the immigration of ethnic Germans and Germans from the *Reich*) will have been on an average of 10 %[45]). In the territory of the *Generalgouvernement*, however, it was far smaller, here there were on an average 100 Poles to 1 German.

The flight of those living in Brandenburg, and in the *Provinz* of Posen, some of whom were scattered much further to the east, was mainly a question of time and distance.

The long distance to be traversed in order to reach the Oder, and the swiftness of the Soviet advance, frustrated the flight of the large majority of the Germans from central Poland and the eastern part of the Warthe territory.

There was the further fact that the responsible Party authorities utterly misappreciated the situation and deceived the population about it and the swiftness of the Soviet advance, and lost much time, by categorically prohibiting the flight of the population, for many days after the Russian offensive had actually begun.

The flight of the Germans proceeded from the east to the west simultaneously with the thrust of the Russian armies, which was being prepared in Central and West Poland. The majority of the treks were in the direction of East Brandenburg. Some of the German population out of the northern Warthe territory moved towards Pomerania, and in the south many fled to Silesia.

As the Russians pushed forward the flight began first in the most eastern districts on 16., 17., and 18. January, and then extended to the more western parts. In the *Provinz* of Posen the flight reached its climax on 20. to 23. January, on the other hand the flight of the East Brandenburg population, as far as it started at all, did so in the last days of January. According to the plan of evacuation of the German authorities the *Reichsgau Wartheland* was divided into three zones, and the orders for evacuation were sent to the separate zones in temporal sequence; the flight developed in waves at intervals, and finally became a general rush and chaos.

It was not until 16. January that the territory east of Kutno, Sierade and Wielun was ordered to be evacuated, and then only for women with small children, and for sick and infirm people. This restricted form of evacuation proved to be the only one which could be carried out in the eastern territory with any degree of success Some thousands of women and children, for instance, were brought in special trains from Lodz to the district of Wollstein, and from here they were able a short time afterwards to continue their flight across the Oder. Owing to the energetic action of the local authorities 3000 women and children were brought out of Wielun to the district of Lissa and were able to cross the Oder from there immediately[46]).

This measure for saving mothers and children was seriously hindered on 16. January owing to the lack of trains and blocking of traffic. Thus on 18. January, when the whole of the eastern zone of the Wartheland was ordered to be evacuated, no more trains could travel out of this territory, because the Russians had reached Lodz in the meantime, and the railway lines between Lodz and Posen, as also between Kutno and Posen, and in addition to this between Wielun and Lissa had already been cut.

With the exception of a part of the town population, who had already travelled by railway to the West in spite of the prohibition to flee, it was scarcely possible on the 18. January for the population of the eastern half of the Warthe territory to any longer think to fleeing[47]). Lorries and motorized vehicles were very rarely available, so that nothing remained but to trek with horses and carts in spite of the bitter cold. Very many tried in this way to escape the advancing Russians, but they were almost all caught-up on the way by the Russian panzer, most of them in fact in the area of Kalisch and Konin[48]). In Lodz, which was the most eastern centre of the Germans in Poland, ten thousands of them fell into the hands of the Russians, before they had even begun their flight.

The flight of the Germans out of the centre of the Warthe territory was more successful. This territory is bordered by the towns of Hohensalza, Posen and Kalisch. Although permission to evacuate this district was not granted until 20. January, the majority of the town population had departed before this date by train and reached the west[49]). After 20. January however, flight from here was also impossible by rail.

As the distances from the area of Hohensalza, Posen and Kalisch to the Oder were mostly less than 200 kilometers, there was a chance of escape for the treks from the villages with baggage. This was provided there was no blocking of the roads, breaks-down of carts and such like delays, or freezing and illness of people as a result of the bitter cold which could hinder the flight.

It is possible that a little less than a half of the people trekking got out of the district and crossed the Oder. The treks, however, which had particularly long distances to cover, mostly did not reach the Oder before the Russians.

The prospects of a successful flight, in consideration of time and distance, were best in the most westerly party of the previous *Provinz* of Posen which bordered on Pomerania, Brandenburg and Silesia. On 20. January permission was granted to evacuate, and the railway was intact between Wollstein–Guben, Bentschen–Frankfurt, Birnbaum–Schwerin–Soldin and Filehne–Landsberg–Küstrin. A great portion of the town population could in this way reach the interior of the *Reich* territory and Pomerania. The majority, however, trekked with horses and carts. For also the town population preferred this kind of trekking in many places, because it was possible to take more baggage with them.

Those treks, which started on 20. or 21. January and had not far to go, in order to reach the *Altreich* frontier, almost without exception reached their destinations in Pomerania and Brandenburg.

The main road from Posen was the chief way of the flight from the districts of Kolmar, Czarnikau, Obornik, Samter and Birnbaum. By this road the treks passed by Schwerin, Landsberg, Soldin, through Neumark and further on to the Prignitz. Numerous refugees went by way of Schneidemühl and Deutsch Krone into East Pomerania. Further south the trekking was chiefly done by the roads between Bentschen–Schwiebus–Frankfurt, Wollstein–Crossen–Guben. Many treks from the south of the Warthe territory poured into the districts of Silesia to the east of the Oder, by way of the roads from Wielun and Ostrovo[50]).

Between 20. and 24. January the treks of those coming from still further east reached the eastern frontier districts, with the result that great numbers of vehicles collected on the roads, and the flight often got held up.

In the district of Kolmar these stoppages assumed such proportions that whole municipalities had to remain at a halt, because it was impossible to proceed further. Before Czernikau there was a catastrophe. At the cross roads here of three ways, and where there is a bridge over the river Netze leading into Pomerania the treks became crowded together in dense masses. On 23. January, before any Russian troops had ever been seen in this neighbourhood, enemy tanks suddenly appeared, drove into the crowds of refugees and caused great havoc amongst them.

Also many treks, which had got more to the west and came from the Warthe territory, were run over by Soviet tanks in the neighbourhood of Schneidemühl, in the Netze district, and in the south Pomeranian districts of Friedeberg and Deutsch Krone to the north of this river. This was after the Russians had crossed the Netze in a broad front on 26. January, and shortly after laid siege to Schneidemühl. In spite of such catastrophes which were not rare it can be safely assumed, that more than a half of the Germans from the western part of the *Reichsgau Wartheland*, where the German population was most dense, succeeded in crossing the Oder51).

Things were different in East Brandenburg. The population there did not at first believe that the danger was serious, and that, in spite of the fact that refugees from the Warthe territory had been passing through since 22. January. For it was indeed hard to believe, that Russian troops had got so near Berlin, the capital of the *Reich*, without meeting with any decisive resistence. Furthermore the Brandenburgers thought they were well protected by the Obra fortification line along the *Reich* frontier, on which re-inforcement work had been going on during the whole of autumn 1944.

Particularly the Party authorities clung to this optimistic idea or any way put it forward as an argument. At the end of January, therefore, the Brandenburg population was forbidden to flee. Only about 100 000 bombed out people from Berlin52), who had found emergency quarters in East Brandenburg were allowed to go, and a part of them was, therefore, able to quit the territory east of the Oder, before it was too late. Nowhere did the *Kreisleiters*, who were responsible for the evacuation, act so fatally as in Brandenburg. Almost everywhere the sudden appearance of Russian tanks caused a precipitate flight, in spite of no permission having been granted, so that it was from the very outset a fiasco.

The first Russian advances into East Brandenburg began both in the south and the north on 28 January. The southern attack proceeded through the districts of Züllichau, Schwiebus, Crossen and Guben, and reached the Oder south of Frankfurt (Fürstenberg). Only a very small portion of the population of these districts succeeded in fleeing; the majority were completely surprised before they had even thought of starting.

In the north the Soviet troops had crossed the river Netze on 26 January between Usch and Czarnikau, passed through the district of the Netze and the Pomeranian district of Friedeberg by 28. January, hastened along the northern bank of the Netze in a northerly direction past the town of Landsberg, through the districts of Landsberg, Soldin and Konigsberg/Neumark in the direction of Küstrin, reaching the Oder in the last days of January. The fate of the population of the Neumark and the district of Schwerin, who were most directly affected by this thrust, was about the same as that of the southern districts of East Brandenburg.

Between 29. and 31. January the population fled in panic from the districts of Schwerin, Landsberg, Soldin and Königsberg/Neumark.

The mass of the rural population was so taken by surprise that it was practically impossible for them to get on the move at any point at all. Only a very few could get away from the town of Landsberg by rail. It was possible for a slightly greater number of the town population of Schwerin and Königsberg/Neumark to cross the Oder by spezial trains in time. The railway could no longer be used from the central districts of Brandenburg to the west, because the Russians had already reached Küstrin and Frankfurt, and the only railway lines from East Brandenburg over the Oder ran by the way of Frankfurt and Küstrin.

The route by way of Frankfurt had been blocked since 28. January, and the Küstrin one three days later. On 1. February a train full of refugees from the town of Drossen (district of West Sternberg) travelling in the direction of Küstrin was on the way shot to pieces by Russian panzer. The casualties were very high Very few of the population succeded in getting out of the central parts of East Brandenburg (Meseritz, East and West Sternberg), just as had been the case in the north and south districts

In almost all the districts of East Brandenburg the Soviet thrust had caused hopeless confusion, with the result that most of the population was run over by the Russian panzer. Not more than 30% to 40% were able to escape and pass over the Oder[53]). We would in conclusion say the following, in regard to the whole territory, between the great bend in the Vistula and the middle course of the Oder, which included the western part of the then *Generalgouvernement*, the *Reichsgau Wartheland* and East Brandenburg:

It may be estimated that 80% to 90% of the whole German population started on the flight, with the exception of those in the eastern parts, and in East Brandenburg who were entirely taken by surprise With few exceptions the Poles living there did not flee Even in cases, where an evacuation was ordered, they were not compelled by the German authorities to leave their homes, and on the other hand they generally did not hinder the Germans in their flight. The German refugees were only in rare cases molested or threatened by fanatical Poles.

It is only possible to make assumptions, with regard to the total number of Germans, who succeeded by evacuation and flight in reaching the *Reich* territory to the west of the Oder. A careful examination of the documents available indicates that of 1.400.000 Germans, living at the beginning of 1945 between the great bend in the Vistula and the middle course of the Oder, 40% to 60% left this territory by the end of January. At least 600.000 Germans were run over on their flight by the Soviet troops or fell into the hands of the Russians at home

There were very high losses on the flight itself; these losses were the result of enemy action, of the intense cold, or of exhaustion among the aged and children. It will never be possible to ascertain the sum total.

b) The flight of the East Prussian population

The Russian thrust of October 1944 led to almost the whole population leaving the eastern zone of East Prussia, with the result that the total number of inhabitants of the still unoccupied land had by the end of 1944 sunk to one and three quarter million[54]). The number of the population of the urban and rural districts of Königsberg and Allenstein had however, increased by about 15%, because a considerable number of the evacuees had been quartered there[55]). As the area of East Prussia had become smaller, this dense crowding of people rendered the flight more difficult, from the very outset.

When the great Russian offensive against East Prussia began in the middle of January 1945 from the East and from the South, it entered a *Provinz* the highest Party Leaders of which obdurately refused to admit the need of evacuation and persisted in this attitude, even when the advance was in full swing. The *Gauleiter* and *Reich* Defense Commissioner of East Prussia jealously saw to it that no order for evacuation was issued in the urban or rural districts which he had not personally sanctioned himself. The result was that these orders came too late to be in accordance with the development of the military situation. Indeed the permission for evacution was often granted so late, that an orderly evacuation under control was no longer possible. — In many parts the orders for evacuation were completely superfluous, as the population had already started on its own.

There was practically nowhere an organized evacuation and which was not too late. The evacuation of the East Prussian population generally broke out, at the last moment without being under the direction of anyone, and developed into a wild flight. It proved, however, to be a blessing that at least a part of the population did not observe the prohibition to flee, but left the menaced parts by rail or trekking, without waiting for the evacuation order.

The course, the direction and the success of flight were, above all, dependent upon the development of the military operations. This and the geographical situation of East Prussia led to various temporal and local crises in the flight

The first stage of the flight began about 19./20. January and lasted until the ring around East Prussia was closed at Elbing on 26. January. The flight was mostly from east to west during this period. The population of the north-east districts of Labiau and Wehlau fled on 19. January to Samland and in the direction of Konigsberg. The flights from the districts of Angerburg, Lötzen, Lyck and Johannisburg, which were situated to the east of the Masurian Lakes, began almost simultaneously on 20. January. These parts had not been evacuated at all or only partially in October.

The treks tried first of all to go straight through East Prussia, in order to then cross the Vistula at Marienwerder or Dirschau, for everyone thought that the advance of the Russians would come to a halt at the lower Vistula. The thrust of the Russians, however, from the south to Elbing to a great extent defeated this purpose of the trekkers. Only a small portion of the population of the eastern districts was able to reach the parts west of the Vistula before East Prussia was encircled, and this was because they had left by rail on 20., 21. and 22. January; about 75,000 people had got out of Königsberg in this way, starting as soon as 15. January. On 21. January the last trains with fugitives left Königsberg, but some of them did not reach Elbing and had to return from Braunsberg to Königsberg; for the day before the southern route was blocked through the fall of Allenstein. It is possible that a few thousand more left East Prussia on 22. January by other rail routes, such as from Lötzen via Rastenburg to Heilsberg and Elbing. All railway traffic, however, from East Prussia to the *Reich* ceased at the latest on the 22. January[56]). There was no prospect, of the mass of the population, who had started on the trek, from the eastern districts, reaching the west by crossing the Vistula. Snow and cold added to the difficulties of the treks in getting ahead on the roads, which were blocked by the vehicles of the refugees and the armed forces. Scarcely a single trek succeeded in reaching the Vistula by land.

With the fall of Allenstein on 21. January the possibility of flight, by roads leading to the west, finally ceased for all those coming from the south. The treks already on the way had to make a détour to the north, and every way to the west over the Vistula was stopped, when the first Russian panzer passed through Elbing on 23. January. It was solely along the *Frisches Haff* that a few refugees, from the neighbourhood of Elbing and Tolkemit, were able to reach the west, by way of the lowlands of Nogat and Vistula. This very small possibility ceased when the Russians advanced to the *Haff* at Tolkemit.

For the time being the situation was more favourable for the south west and west districts of East Prussia, through which the Soviet troops advanced to Elbing, out of the area of Chiechanov and Soldau.

From 19. to 21. January several columns of refugees came from the districts of Neidenburg, Ortelsburg, Allenstein, Osterode, Mohrungen and Preussisch Holland and proceeded either by way of Deutsch Eylau and Thorn to the south-west, or by way of Marienburg and Elbing to the north-west.

There was an enormous crowding of people at the railway stations, which was caused by the very swift advance of the Russians, which reached the most southern district of Neidenburg on 18. January, the districts of Ortelsburg, Osterode and Deutsch Eylau on 19. and 20. January and extended on 21. and 22. January to the neighbourhood of Allenstein, Mohrungen and Preussisch Holland.

This Russian thrust was most fatal for those of the refugees who had been trekking from 19. January to the north and north west. With the exception of the treks from the district of Preussisch Holland and the western half of the district of Mohrungen, who had taken the direct road to the west in the direction of Marienburg and thus avoided the encirclement of East Prussia, the village and baggage columns, from the south and south west districts, were on the roads leading to the north west in the direction of Elbing and *Frisches Haff*. And this was the route which the Soviet tanks had chosen for their advance.

A part of the treks from the districts of Ortelsburg, Allenstein and Mohrungen were able to branch off to the north in time, but the majority fell into the hands of the Russians. Most of the treks from the district of Osterode, which was in the middle of the Russian operation, were run over by enemy panzer in the district territory itself[67]).

A great number of people from this south-western part of East Prussia were caught by the Russians, in their native villages and towns, even before they had decided to trek. In Allenstein half the population of the town were still there, when it was suddenly occupied by the surprise attack of the Soviet troops. There were also thousends of the inhabitants of the town and of refugees in Osterode, when the Russians marched in.

As a result of the Soviet thrust ending in the isolation of East Prussia about a half of the 500,000 people living in the south west of the *Provinz*, (south of the area Elbing, Allenstein, Ortelsburg), were surprised and overtaken by the tanks. About a quarter reached the west by passing over the Vistula, either by rail, by motor cars, or with the trek. The rest fled to the area south of *Frisches Haff;* this locality became the centre of East Prussian trekking during the following weeks.

Now that the direct way by land from East Prussia to the *Reich* had been intercepted, only a week after the trekking had begun, there remained only two possibilities of flight: — by sea transport from Pillau, or over the ice of the *Frisches Haff* to the *Nehrung*, and from there by way of Kahlberg and the mouth of the Vistula to Danzig, and then on to Pomerania.

The road to Samland and Pillau was the best way for the people from the northern corner of East Prussia, on the other hand most of those coming from the south-eastern and central parts followed the road leading to the *Frisches Haff.* Those treks, which had started on 20./21. January from the districts of Lötzen, Lyck and Johannisburg to the east of the Masurian lakes and had first of all moved in a westerly direction, now turned off to the north west and passed through the districts of Sensburg, Rossel and Rastenburg. They were joined by parts of the treks from the district of Ortelsburg, who had fled from the southern Russian thrust. Thus inconceivably large masses of refugees collected in the territory to the immediate west of the Masurian lakes. Finally, after 25. January also the population of the districts Rastenburg, Sensburg and Rössel began to flee before the advancing Russians, and the roads were soon so blocked that the inhabitants of many localities regarded the flight as hopeless and awaited the Soviet troops in their homes58).

The severe East Prussian winter, the news of the thrust of the Soviet troops to Elbing and as far as Königsberg, and also the obvious misery of the columns of refugees deprived some of the population of the courage to start. On 26. January the town of Rastenburg was taken by the Red Army and on 28. January Sensburg and Rössel. Not only many of the citizens of the towns fell into the hands of the Russians, but also many treks which had come from further east and had not got forward quickly enough.

However, the population by no means gave up the flight. Although the area to the south of the *Haff,* in which there were no enemy troops, was at the end of January getting visibly smaller, further masses were pouring from the south and east into the districts of Prussian-Eylau, Heilsberg, Braunsberg and Heiligenbeil, and the Russians were still causing hopeless confusion among the refugees59). Treks and refugees from almost all East Prussian districts met here60), and masses of people were congested together, in such a degree that it was beyond the capacity of the authorities to deal with them. Great losses were also caused by cold, hunger and air raids, particularly in the towns of Braunsberg, Mehlsack and Heiligenbeil61).

From the end of January until the last days of February hundreds of thousands of refugees had been trekking from near Heiligenbeil and Braunsberg over the ice of the *Frisches Haff* to the *Nehrung.*

Whilst the pocket to the south of the *Haff* had been doggedly defended by German troops, and only got more hemmed in, after weeks of fighting, hundreds of thousands of people and heavily loaded horses and carts were passing day and night over the marked out trekking routes, through this last dangerous opening in the Russian encirclement of East Prussia.

Many people were killed during this flight over the ice and the *Nehrung,* owing to the ice breaking, Russian air raids over the endless columns of refugees, the dropping of bombs on the ice, freezing to death, hunger thirst and over-exhaustion.

The refugees went from the *Haff* along the *Nehrung* road to the west, in the direction of Kahlberg and Stutthof. By far the greatest number of the refugees who were fortunate enough to reach the *Nehrung* continued their flight by this way to Danzig and Pomerania. A smaller number went eastwards to Neutief, left their horses and carts behind, and tried to reach the west of the *Reich* by sea from Pillau[62]). At the end of February the ice began to thaw and put an end to the flight over the *Haff.* Meanwhile the pocket on the coast of the *Haff* had been continually more hemmed in During the heavy fighting which had been going on for weeks and had devastated the land, a part of the population and the refugees in the districts of Braunsberg and Heiligenbeil had already fallen into the hands of the Russians, or had given up their efforts to flee, in terror of the misery and dangers of the flight over the *Haff.* The great majority of the people, who had been crowded together in January and February to the south of the *Haff,* got over the ice.

The number was a little less than half a million[63]). After the flight over the *Haff* had ceased at the end of February and the defense of the pocket of Heiligenbeil had been finally given up at the end of March, there remained only a few hiding places in Königsberg and Samland. In the last days of January the attacking Soviet troops stormed into the area of Königsberg and Samland. The result was the encirclement of Konigsberg, and that the German front in Samland was forced back to the Baltic coast.

Some ten thousands of the population and refugees were surprised in Cranz and other parts of Samland by Soviet units[64]). In the course of the encirclement of Konigsberg and near Metgethen, the people fleeing in the direction of Pillau were overtaken to the north of Königsberg by Russians, who by their treatment inspired them with the greatest terror[65]).

The mass of the refugees and the population who had poured back into Samland succeeded for the first in escaping to Königsberg, or to the small strip of coast from Neukuhren, as far as Pillau and Fischhausen. Over 150,000 people were crowded together in Königsberg and 200,000 in the area of Samland in which there were no enemy troops.

The population of Königsberg had first of all fled by rail, but on the 21. January the trains ceased running to the *Reich.* After this, great numbers had gone to Pillau, in order to proceed from there to the west by way of the *Nehrung,* or by sea to the *Reich.* At the end of January the encirclement was completed, but small numbers of people were brought by water to Pillau. In the middle of February connection from the north of the town with Samland was re-established for a few weeks by the German troops, and further portions of the population were able to be brought from Königsberg to Samland. However, about, 100,000 people remained in Königsberg[66]). Many of them did not follow out the orders of the Party to quit the town, because they felt safer there than in Samland or on the dangerous trek by way of Pillau[67]).

The continual air and artillery bombing of Königsberg during the process of encirclement completely destroyed a great part of the town, which had already suffered very much from air raids. Also great losses were caused among those still living there in cellars. On 6. to 9. April there followed the final attack of the Red Army on Königsberg, and many civilians were again caught in the fighting[68]). About 25 % of the population which had remained in Königsberg had been killed in the fighting, when the town was surrendered to the Russians on 9. April[69]).

The last and only stronghold now remaining in the hands of the Germans was the strip of land along the Samland coast and the area around Pillau and Fischhausen. There were still many thousands of people from Königsberg, Samland and more easterly districts quartered in Pillau, Fischhausen, Palmnicken, Rauschen and Neukuhren. This was in spite of the fact that the majority of the refugees had already been brough away from Pillau by sea.

The first ships with refugees left Pillau on 25. January, and it was officially reported there on 15. February that 204 000 had already been brought away by sea, that a further 50 000 had been ferried over to Neutief and were trekking further by way of the *Frische Nehrung*[70]).

Many thousands continued to pour into Pillau, who came not only by land but were ferried over from Neukuhren in small ships. There were on many days more than 75 000 people in the town, and the Soviet airplanes caused much havoc amongst them. Between the beginning of March and the middle of April there were 13 violent air raids over Pillau, whilst the Soviet artillery at the same time bombarded both the town and the harbour.

From 8. March the removal of refugees had to be stopped for about three weeks, because all available ships were required during this time for evacuating refugees from the towns of Danzig and Gdingen, which were in danger of very shortly being taken by the Soviet troops[71]). During the time that no ships sailed from Pillau, many thousands moved over to Neutief and along the *Nehrung;* for ferry barges were plying from Danzig promontory to Hela, even after the city of Danzig had been taken by the Russians. These refugees were able to be brought further from Hela to the *Reich.*

From the end of March ships began sailing again from Pillau. When, however, the Russians began their great attack in the middle of April against the Samland front, after the fall of Königsberg, Pillau ceased to be a centre for refugees, and within a few days the defenses along the Samland coast had to be given up. It was now only possible for a portion of the population to flee from Neukuhren, and Rauschen, and a few also from Palmnicken and the town of Fischhausen. There were also a great number who no longer had the courage to flee further, and who awaited the arrival of the Russians in resignation. On the 20. April the battle for the fortress of Pillau began; it ended with the Soviet troops being brought over to Neutief. In this operation many German troops were taken prisoner by the Russians, the majority of the refugees, however, had been already got away. Hundreds of thousands were saved by the flight to Pillau; between the end of January and the end of April, 451 000 refugees left the harbour by ship and during the same period 180 000 to 200 000 were brought over to Neutief[72].

Many thousands lost their lives by the sinking of ships[73]. The great majority, however, of those brought away by sea reached the western part of the *Reich* in safety or landed in Denmark which was still occupied by German troops[74]. Over 75 % of the population which was in East Prussia at the beginning of 1945 left the land during the offensive, in order to escape being caught by the Russians. Only about 400 000 did not leave, because they were either surprised by the Russians or remained behind for personal reasons[75]. It may be assumed that among these was the Polish minority, which was not very numerous; we have, however, no evidence of this, About a half a million people remained, therefore, in East Prussia, if one also reckons about 100 000 people who fell into the hands of the Russians, in the Memel area and in the government district of Gumbinnen in the autumn of 1944.

If we summarize the course of the flight from East Prussia generally and in approximate figures we arrive at the following result:

Number of the population of East Prussia at the beginning of 1944 (including the Memel area and without the Government district of West Prussia)	2 350 000
Evacuated or emigrated in autumn of 1944	500 000
From January 1945:	
By land (rail or trek) to the west	250 000[76].
Over the *Haff* into the area of Danzig-Pomerania	450 000[76].
From Pillau over the *Nehrung* into the area of Danzig-Pomerania	200 000
From Pillau by sea	450 000
In East Prussia captured by Russians	500 000

Hundreds of thousands of these people were not released from their sufferings when they quitted their East Prussian home. In the area of Danzig and East Pomerania they again landed among the turmoil of the war, and many of them were captured there by the Russians.

c) The flight of the German population from Danzig, West Prussia and East Pomerania

The territory stretching from the province of East Prussia to the west, which is bounded on the south by the river Netze, on the west by the river Oder and on the north by the coast of the Baltic Sea, was from the end of January 1945 a special field of operations in the course of the fighting.

The Russian advance by way of Thorn, Bromberg and Schneidemühl to Küstrin had touched the southern districts of West Prussia and Pomerania, but on its northern flank, between the Vistula and Oder, left a 100 kilometer wide strip of land along the Baltic Sea coast untouched. This territory was simultaneously separated also from East Prussia by the Soviet attack on the Elbing sector. As has been already mentioned, there was only a narrow connection with East Prussia, by way of the *Frische Nehrung*. Hundreds of thousands poured this way into the Vistula lowlands, Danzig and Pomerania.

This territory, which included the northern part of West Prussia with the mouth of the Vistula, Danzig, Gdingen, Hela and East Pomerania, became from the end of January the great reception and transit area for the refugees from East Prussia and the west Polish districts.

The 800 000 East Prussian refugees constituted the main portion of this immigration.

The fates of the East Prussian refugees were very various, after they had quitted their land. Many passed in endless columns through Pomerania, some departed by rail from Danzig or Pomerania for the part of the *Reich* to the west of the Oder[77]), and others succeeded in boarding ships in Danzig which brought them into safety[78]). About the half, however, of all the East Prussian refugees remained in the area of Danzig or of Pomerania and were later on in March overtaken by Russian troops[79]). To this great number of East Prussian refugees must be added between 100 000 and 200 000 others, who during the last days of January were compelled to flee from the northern districts of the Warthe territory, and poured from the south into Pomerania[80]).

Apart from all these refugees, of whom about a half or approximately half a million remained in West Prussia, Danzig and Pomerania, there were almost three million Germans living at this time between East Prussia and the Lower course of the Oder: — over 1 600 000 in East Pomerania, 404 000 in the area of the Free City of Danzig, 310 000 in the old West Prussian territory, which had belonged to East Prussia until 1939, and a further 307 000 in that part of the *Reichsgau* Danzig-Westprussia which had become Polish since 1920.

The first contact with the Soviet troops in this area was in West Prussia, of which those parts, to the east of the Vistula and lying between Elbing and Thorn, were included in the Russian advance for the encirclement of East Prussia, simultaneously and in the same measure as the neighbouring East Prussian districts. Other than in the case of East Prussia, detailed plans of evacuation had been drawn up, since the autumn of 1944, for the districts of West Prussia to the east of the Vistula. The plans provided for near destinations, definite trek ways and reception districts in the neighbourhood to the west of the Vistula[81]). However, also in this case, the orders to move were issued with such procrastination in the last decisive days of January, that the plans were sooner or later annulled by the events which happened. It was only in the most eastern districts of Lipno, Rypin, Strasburg and Neumark that the order for evacuation was issued as soon as 18. January. The result was that, particularly in the district of Neumark, an almost complete evacuation of the German population could be carried out, before it was too late, to the prescribed reception centres west of the Vistula.

When Soviet troops advanced from south to north, the flight of the population from the neighbouring northern districts of Rosenberg and Marienwerder did not go so smoothly; these places had not received the evacuation order until 20. January. In the districts of Stuhm and Marienburg the evacuation was delayed until 23. January.

In their advance to Elbing Russian troops reached this territory on 23. January, and in addition to this fact the roads and the bridges over the Nogat and Vistula were blocked by East Prussian refugees; the result was that several treks which were still to the east of the Nogat and Vistula were caught by the Russians. Nevertheless the great majority of the people from the districts between the Nogat and Vistula and East Prussian frontier, which were populated exclusively by Germans, succeeded in reaching the western part of West Prussia or Pomerania. A considerable number were caught up there by the Soviet troops in March. It was also possible to get away the majority of the town population at the last moment by rail.

The bridges over the Vistula at Marienwerder and Dirschau and also over the Nogat at Marienburg, as also the town and environments of Elbing were during these days critical points for the refugees. Since 15. January the trains departing from Elbing were over crowded with refugees from Königsberg. Numerous treks from East Prussia had passed through Elbing, and many refugees had taken up their permanent quarters in the town which was considered to be safe. Together with 90 000 citizens of Elbing they formed a huge mass of people, who suddenly began to flee in panic, when the first Russian panzer forced its way into Elbing on 23. January. During the following days, the few trains which still ran and all other kinds of transport were stormed by the crowds. As the way to the west and north was open, with a few interruptions, until 30. January, about 80 % of the people crowded together in Elbing succeeded in escaping to Danzig and Pomerania; some of them went in boats by a channel and straight across the *Haff* to Pillau. Several thousands, however remained in the town during its encirclement and fell into the hands of the Russians, when it was taken on 9. February. In the rural district of Elbing the number of people surprised by the Russians was far greater.

Simultaneously with the flight of the population from the old German territories along the East Prussian frontier, there began the exodus of the

German inhabitants from the districts of Graudenz, Kulm, Schwetz, Thorn and Bromberg, the population of which was partly German and partly Polish[82]). Until the end of January 1945, also all the territory here to the east of the Vistula and the south of a line between Graudenz and Zempelburg had been attacked by the Russians The flight of the Germans from Thorn, Bromberg, Graudenz and the neighbourhood began as from 22./23. January Some of the people went by train and some trekked, and within a short time the whole German population, in the southern part of West Prussia, was on its way to the west.

As the Vistula bridges were reserved for German military, the treks had to walk over the frozen stream. The further the refugees got on their way to the west, the worse was the blocking of the roads. There was such a great chaos caused by the refugees in the district of Wirsitz on the Pomeranian frontier[83]), that it was useless for parts of the native population to attempt to flee We must assume, in general, that less of the population got out of the southern districts of West Prussia than out of the districts on the East Prussian frontier which were purely German[84]).

Following closely on these events in West Prussia and the simultaneous operations in the Warthe territory and East Brandenburg[85]), the first Soviet troops began to invade the south of East Pomerania at the end of January 1945. In the last days of January the Red Army pushed north of the river Netze into the Netze district, and into the districts of Flatow, Deutsch Krone, Friedeberg and Arnswalde; this was in conjunction with the advance to Küstrin by way of Schneidemühl, the object of which was clearly to reach the mouth of the Oder at Stettin. The population of these parts, to the east of Pomerania, had as from 20. January been summoned to prepare for trekking, but when the first Russian tanks appeared on 26. January there was complete confusion. Orders for evacuation were issued and revoked Part of the population started on their way in spite of snow, storms and the bitterest cold, some did not, and were found by the Soviet troops in the places where they lived.

Others fell, shortly after they had started, into the hands of advancing Russian units. Apart from the town of Schneidemühl, which with the exception of a very few thousand had been evacuated since 20. January, only about a quarter to a third of the population of the Netze district and the district of Flatow, Deutsch Krone, and Friedeberg was able to escape across the Oder. Conditions in the districts of Arnswalde, Pyritz and Greifenhagen were more favourable, as the Russians did not get there until the beginning of February. More than a half of the population escaped from these districts, as they were situated near the Oder.

The Russian advance in the direction of the mouth of the Oder came to a halt in these parts. It excended to the southern extremities of the districts of Stargard, Dramburg, Neustettin and Schlochau, but was unable to gain further ground on the lower courses of the Oder, as this was being defended by German troops in fighting trim. At the beginning of February these troops succeeded in re-occupying ground in the course of counter-attacks, and even in liberating a part of the population which was under the yoke of the Russians. Pomerania and West Prussia now had a comparative rest for four weeks. The front hardly changed during the month of February, and stretched approximately along a line between Graudenz, Zempelburg, Märkisch Friedland, Stargard and Pyritz, as far as the northern corner of the district of Königsberg/Neumark. The flight was during the following weeks mainly in the direction of the city of Danzig and its surroundings, and was proceeding within the area to the north of this line, and which in addition to being a reception territory for the refugees from East Prussia and the *Reichsgau Wartheland,* also had to function as such for the people from West Prussia and South Pomerania.

The main flood of East Prussian refugees, who had crossed the *Frisches Haff,* poured into the surroundings of Danzig during the month of February Enormous crowds of people and vehicles got congested on the narrow *Nehrung* road, and there were terrible scenes of desperation and distress[86]). In spite of the abundant help from the National Socialist People's Welfare (NSV), from the Red-Cross and other organizations in Kahlberg and Stutthof, it was not possible, even in an approximately adequate degree, to give food and quarters to those in need of them nor to help those who had been injured or become ill on the way[87]). As the roads were so overcrowded many refugees from Kahlberg and Stutthof were brought in barges and ships to Danzig, others had to wait in hutments at Stutthof until they could be brought further. Also in Danzig some of these masses of refugees had to be first of all quartered in camps, because the ships departing from the harbour were just as overcrowded, as the trains still running via Stettin to the west of the *Reich*[88]).

Many refugees, from East and West Prussia, made the mistake of remaining in Danzig and Pomerania, being misled by the comparatively peaceful state of affairs prevailing there in February 1945 This applied still more to the native population only small portions of which utilized the still existing connections with the west, and travelled by train or ship or trekked to the territory west of the Oder.

In this regard the situation was rendered more difficult by the fact, that the Party had forbidden the whole population of Pomerania and the northern part of West Prussia to flee, this prohibition also partially applied to the treks from the east which were still in Pomerania. The result was that at the beginning of March, when the Russians launched their great attack against East Pomerania and Danzig, the population of this territory had not decreased at all, but had increased by some hundreds of thousands owing to the influx of the refugees. There were still at least two and a half million Germans, of which more than 25 % were refugees[89]) in the northern part of West Prussia, in the area of Danzig and in East Pomerania. Only a small portion of these were able to cross the Oder to the west, after the Russian offensive had started at the beginning of March.

At the beginning of February the Soviet armies, helped by the 1. Polish Army had begun simultaneously in West Prussia and East Pomerania, their decisive attacks, for the purpose of gaining possession of the Baltic coast and of occupying the territory between the lower courses of the Vistula and the

Oder. Proceeding from south to north they had gained possession of all East Pomerania in barely 14 days. —

The two chief thrusts of the Soviet troops, in the territory of East Pomerania, were delivered on the one hand from the area of Friedeberg and Arnswalde in the direction of the mouth of the Oder at Stettin, and further northwards in the direction of the Baltic coast at Cammin, on the other hand from the area of Schneidemühl and Deutsch Krone by way of Neustettin and Bublitz in the direction of the Baltic coast to the east of Köslin. Both goals were very quickly reached, and this led to an almost hopeless situation for the fleeing population of Pomerania.

On the 1. March Soviet troops were already on the Baltic coast to the east of Koslin. The result was that East Pomerania was split in two, and that the land connection with the west was intercepted, for all districts situated to the east of a line between Neustettin and Köslin.

Also from the western half of East Pomerania the possibilities of flight had very considerably diminished, for the Russian troops had reached the mouth of the Oder at Stettin by 3. March, and the most important roads and railway routes out of East Pomerania had already been intercepted. Therefore, the number of those who were not able to flee from East Pomerania was greater than in other east German *provinzes;* this was aggravated by the fact that Party prohibitions to flee either delayed the flight too long, or made it altogether impossible. Hundreds of thousands, however, tried either with or without permission, to escape from the Russians. In the western half of East Pomerania the flight, which had begun at the end of February in the districts of Neustettin and Köslin, reached its climax between 3. and 7. March. A part of the population from the districts of Köslin, Belgard and Dramburg began to trek or to flee by rail in the direction of Kolberg, in order to try and get to the west by ship from there, or along the Baltic coast by way of Dievenow.

Also in the other districts the general flight was in the direction of north and north east. But in most cases the Russian troops were quicker than the carts of the population which were hampered by stoppages of the traffic. Numerous treks and trains carrying refugees were overtaken, on the roads leading from the south to the north and north east, on the railway near Belgard, and before Kolberg. The way to the west was intercepted for a great number of treks, when the Russian advance finally reached the coast near Kolberg on 3. March. Many of them succeeded in escaping to Kolberg, and were, later on during the siege of the town, brought overseas from there. The area of the land, in the north western corner of East Pomerania, between the *Haff* of Stettin and the Baltic coast, in which there were no enemy troops, was getting continually smaller. By 3. March Russian troops had already forced their way into the districts of Cammin, Regenwalde and Greifenberg, had taken Treptow by 4. March and surprised great numbers of refugees on the roads between Labes, Schievelbein, Kolberg and Treptow In the general confusion which ensued a few, who had already been overtaken by the Russian vanguard, succeeded in continuing their flight. This was done under cover of German troops who were also hastening from east to west. It was, however, much too late for most of them to escape from the enemy.

On the 7. March Russo-Polish units had reached the Baltic coast on both sides of Kolberg, and the siege of the town began.

Although a great part of the population had succeeded in making a hasty retreat to the west along the coast by way of Treptow; there were about 80 000 people in Kolberg, when it was encircled. Over a half of these were refugees from the districts of Köslin and Belgard. Thanks to the dogged defence it was possible to get 70 000 of these people overseas, before the town was taken on 18. March; only a few thousand remained behind. The last opening on the Baltic coast near Dievenow, where it was possible to slip through to the west, was closed before Kolberg was taken. Up to the 10. March it had been possible for the German troops to hold a small strip of land right on the beach of the Baltic coast. In this way thousands had been able to pass over to the Island of Wollin or to proceed by ship to Swinemünde. Meanwhile, in the most eastern corner of Pomerania there was a flight in the opposite direction. Since the Russians had reached the Baltic near Köslin on 1. March, it was no longer possible for the population of the districts of Rummelsburg, Bütow, Schlawe, Stolp and Lauenburg to reach the west by land. — Also all the refugees from East Prussia, West Prussia or Danzig, who were still in this territory on their way to the west, had to turn about and attempt to make a détour to the east. For the only possible way out, still remaining, was by the Pomeranian harbours of Stolpmünde and Leba, or particularly by the harbour of Gdingen and Danzig. The advance of the Soviet troops in West Prussia to the north, at the same time that they attacked Pomerania and also pushed on into the districts of Konitz, Prussian Stargard and Berent, caused a universal flight at the beginning of March from the south, south west and west into the country around Danzig.

The rural population, who were trekking with their vehicles wandered about in helplessness and at their wits'ends Most of them could not make up their minds to leave the trek and abandon their goods and chattels, in order to escape overseas. And so it came to pass that, particularly in the neighbourhood of Stolp, huge numbers of East Prussian, West Prussian and Pomeranian treks were overtaken by the Soviet troops.

As the Russians had entered Bütow on 5. March, occupied Stolp and its port Stolpmünde on 8. March and on 9. and 10. March reached Leba and Lauenburg, the permission to flee being mostly issued only 24 hours beforehand90), there began during these days a wild headlong flight by rail, by motor car and on foot to the area of Danzig. All the roads were soon blocked and there arose a state of hopeless confusion in the East Pomeranian districts of Stolp and Lauenburg, and also in the West Prussian districts of Neustadt and Karthaus91). A great part of the rural and urban population was no longer able to escape. Even in cases, where there was time enough, complete exhaustion, after weeks of flight, or fear of the dangerous sea-passage prevented many from taking the last chance. Many refugees feared to board the ships, as many had been sunk, particularly the "Wilhelm Gustloff" by Russian submarines off Stolpmünde, with over 5000 refugees aboard who were all drowned in the Baltic92) and in the towns of Stolp, Bütow, Lauenburg and in the rural municipalities many thousands remained behind, and afterwards had to suffer the atrocities of the Russians, when they arrived[93])

Only a few ships still sailed from the small Pomeranian ports of Stolpmünde and Leba, before they were occupied by the Russians, but many refugees waited in vain to be shipped to the west, until the Russians advancing from the land actually took possession of the harbours With the exception of Kolberg, which was defended until 18. March, the whole of East Pomerania was by 10. March occupied by the Red Army. In the meanwhile the ring round Danzig was continually being tightened. In Gdingen and Danzig the quays were continually crowded with people who preferred the dangers of the sea journey to falling into the hands of the Russians, and who were, therefore, eagerly awaiting the arrival of ships.

All available shipping was ordered to proceed to the ports of Danzig, Gdingen and Hela; even at Pillau the removal of refugees by ships was temporarily stopped[94]). This was done, in view of the pending surrender of Danzig and Gdingen, in order to remove the hundreds of thousands of refugees, who had come from East Prussia, West Prussia and Pomerania, and who were crowded together in the coastal territory of the Bay of Danzig and particularly in Danzig itself. Every day transport ships came to Danzig and Gdingen, and fetched refugees away to the west, but new refugees continued to pour in. By the middle of March almost all the German population of Gdingen had been brought on board ships; then on the days following large numbers of refugees from West Prussia, East Prussia and Pomerania moved into the empty dwellings.

On 22. March the Soviet troops succeeded in breaking through to the coast between Danzig and Gdingen, and then began the final fight for these two "fortresses".

About 35 000 soldiers and refugees were brought from Oxhöft, which is to the north of Gdingen, on 25. March in boats and pontoons to Hela, when the Russians were already in the neighbourhood. Only a few thousand remained behind.

After the docks of Danzig and Gdingen had been blown up on 25. March and shipping traffic stopped, many thousands of people had to remain behind in Danzig, which was occupied by the Russians on 27. March. There had been nearly half a million people in Danzig during March, and, during the last days of the month, at the most a half of them had been brought by ship to the western part of the *Reich*, or by ferries to Hela. About 200 000 natives and refugees, who had sought shelter in Danzig and the towns of Zoppot and Gdingen, had the most shocking experiences, when the Soviet troops marched in, and this, after they had been through many weeks of heavy air raids.

After the fortress of Danzig-Gotenhafen had been taken, there remained, until the capitulation of the *Reich*, Hela and a small strip of coast near Schiewenhorst in the Vistula lowlands, as the last point of departure by sea for refugees. These two places were able to hold out until the end of the war, owing to their strong natural position Tens of thousands of refugees and soldiers were in the small space around Schiewenhorst and Nickelswalde in the Vistula lowlands, and, in the course of the months of April and

May, they were almost all brought over to Hela in barges and ferries The tip of the narrow tongue of land, with the village and harbour of Hela, jutting out into the Bay of Danzig was the centre of the last sea transports during the months of April and May 1945.

From Oxhöft in the west, from the mouth of the Vistula (Schiewenhorst and Nickelswalde) and Kahlberg in the south, and from Pillau in the east vessels of the navy, boats and freight ships kept coming in, and incessantly brought away soldiers and refugees In April there came another 265 000 people to Hela in addition to the more than 100 000 who had arrived there in March. Continual Russian air raids not only caused heavy losses to the soldiers and civilians, who were literally packed together in Hela, but they made the removal of the people by sea more than most extremely difficult

It was a great achievement that, in spite of this, the majority of these people were brought by sea to Schleswig-Holstein or Denmark. In April alone 387 000 people left Hela by sea. The last ships departed from Hela on 6. May with over 40 000 soldiers and refugees. The majority of the 60 000 who remained behind belonged to the armed forces. Between the end of January and the end of April about 900 000 were brought to the west, from the Bay of Danzig and East Pomeranian ports95). The number of those, who got out of Pomerania by land in the beginning of March, was far lower. It may be safely assumed that it was not more than from 200 000 to 300 000 people. A much greater proportion of the native German population than in East Prussia had to remain behind in East Pomerania, in the area of Danzig and in West Prussia, and this was in spite of the indefatigable and devoted efforts of the fighting navy. About 1.5 to 2 million Germans, of whom many were natives of East Prussia, came in these parts under the power of the Russians.

d) The Flight of the Population of Silesia

The fact that about 40% of all Germans dwelling on the other side of the Oder, Neisse line were Silesians makes the expulsion of these people particularly important, when considering the whole of the process by which the expellees were driven out.

At the beginning of the year 1945 there lived about 4.7. million German nationals in Silesia (the frontiers of 1937). Among these people there was a small group, particularly in Upper Silesia, of which the members felt themselves to be Poles, spoke Polish or were of Polish origin These people were less afraid of the invasion of the Red Army and were afterwards treated, in fact, quite differently by the Russians and the Poles from the mass of the German population. The people of German origin and speech in East Upper Silesia, which had since 1921 belonged to the Polish state, was about the same in numbers as the group of Poles in the western part of Upper Silesia96). These were affected in the same way as the German population of the Eastern territories of the *Reich* and must, therefore, be included, when we consider the process of the flight in Silesia.

In regard to the flight of the population of Silesia, it was of great importance that this flight generally took place under more favourable conditions than the flight of other parts of the East German population. It was not possible suddenly to overwhelm Silesia, as was the case in the West Polish territories, in East Prussia, in East Pomerania and in East Brandenburg. Furthermore, up to the very last it was possible for the population of Silesia to flee, by the comparitively free route, into the mountains between Silesia and Bohemia or over to Bohemia and Moravia. Also in Silesia it often enough happened that treks were overtaken or were encircled in pockets, and that the routes of the flight were blocked. This was in many cases fatal for the refugees from East Prussia, Pomerania, Brandenburg and the Polish territories. It did not, however, affect the flight of the Silesian population in the same way.

The evacuation or flight of the population of Silesia proceeded in consecutive waves, which were determined by the advance of the Russians, and affected respectively different parts of the country. The first great flight wave started between 19. and 25. January. It affected the whole territory to the east of the Oder, from the industrial district in the extreme south east as far as the district of Grünberg, on the frontier between Silesia and Brandenburg. There lived about one and a half million Germans in this part of Silesia which extended along the right bank of the Oder; nearly half of them mainly in the rural districts of Lower Silesia and in the goverment district of Oppeln, and the rest of them in the small urban industrial district around Kattowitz, Beuthen, Gleiwitz and Hindenburg. The Russian troops advanced between 19 and 25. January simultaneously into the wide rural area to the right of the Oder and into the urban industrial district in the southeast corner of Silesia.

In the industrial territory of the east of Upper Silesia, only women with small children were ordered to be evacuated and brought away by rail as the front got nearer. All other persons, particulary those occupied in industry and the administration, were strictly forbidden by the *Gauleiter* to leave their places of residence; this was in order that production could be kept up to its maximum[97]). Nevertheless, when the Soviet troops kept getting nearer to Kattowitz, Beuthen, Gleiwitz and Hindenburg about 20. January, many Germans hastened to try and get to the west, the most of them by rail, and some of them by lorries. After the first Russian units had crossed the Oder on 22. January between Brieg and Ohlau, all the main lines of the railway, leading out of the industrial territory, by way of Breslau to the west, were closed. The only remaining possibility of flight was via the southern route of Ratibor and Neisse. However, there were soon not trains enough by this route to convey the people who wanted to get to the west. The stations from Ratibor as far as Schweidnitz and Liegnitz were overcrowded, all along the southern route with people from Upper Silesia, and it was often necessary to walk.

Many of the refugees from the industrial area made for the mountains on the frontier or for Sudeten territory. Others travelled further as far as Saxony, Thuringia and the west of the *Reich*, in order to try and find quarters with relatives or acquaintances.

Although great numbers of the inhabitants of the east Upper Silesian industrial district had meanwhile left it, there were still several hundreds of thousands of Germans, the majority of the Poles and of the Polish speaking Upper Silesians there, when the Soviet Troops occupied the towns of Kattowitz, Gleiwitz, Beuthen and Hindenburg at the end of January, and then took possession of most of the Upper Silesian collieries and industrial plants.

Most of those occupied in industriy had not been able to evade the order to remain there, and many of them were working underground in the mines, whilst the fight for the collieries was still in progress on the surface[98]). There were probably half a million Germans who voluntarily remained behind or were forced to do so[99]).

It may be that many of those who spoke Polish or at least could understand it, and had been intimate with the Poles working in Upper Silesian industry, were confirmed in their decision to remain, by the confidence they had acquired in being able to understand one another at their work. The fate of the Germans was, however, a very cruel one, when the Russians marched into Upper Silesia, and all such hopes were destroyed[100]).

Contrary to what happened in the Upper Silesian industrial district, only a small part of the population of the rural districts in Upper and Lower Silesia to the east of the Oder, experienced the entry of the Red Army into their homes. Passing treks from the Warthe territory[101]) had for days been bringing news of the threatening storm of the Red Army. However, it was not until 19. 20. and 21. January (and then only on the demand of the military commanders) that the evacuation began. In some cases the first Russian troops arrived only 24 hours after the order to evacuate.

Nevertheless, of the approximately 700 000 inhabitants of the districts to the east of the Oder and between Oppeln and Glogau at the most 100 000 remained behind in their homes[102]).

After the orders to evacuate had been issued, the majority of the population, with the exception of old people many of whom voluntarily remained behind, made a rush upon the trains, omnibusses and motorized vehicles placed at their disposal. As there were not sufficient of these, great numbers of the town population had to be placed with little baggage on the carts available and started off with the treks of the rural municipalities. Reception districts were fixed on the other side of the Oder for the different districts to the east of it. — As it was generally believed that the Oder would hold up the Russian troops for some time, the evacuated population was first of all quartered in comparatively near districts along the left bank of the Oder, such as the localities of Liegnitz, Goldberg, Schweidnitz, or in the other districts on the left bank of the stream.

When the military commanders insisted with success on a 20 kilometer zone behind the Oder front being evacuated, and the fighting reached this area also later on, the refugees were then transported further away, either to Saxony or over the mountains to the Sudeten territory and into the interior of Bohemia[103]).

The majority of the population had within 4 to 5 days been evacuated from the districts of Glogau-Land, Fraustadt, Guhrau, Wohlau, Militsch, Trebnitz, Gross Wartenberg, Oels, Namslau, Kreuzberg, Rosenberg and the eastern half of the districts of Oppeln and Brieg. This had put an extremely great strain on the means of transport and the roads. Temporary victualling stations had been established here and there in the parts through which the refugees passed, in order to alleviate their distress which was aggravated by the bitter cold[101]) Their capacity, however, soon proved insufficient for the crowds coming.

The first great flight wave was by no means at an end with the evacuation of the right bank of the Oder. For the Russian troops, which pushed forward to the Oder at the end of January, were not only threatening numerous rural districts of Lower and Upper Silesia, but also in particular Breslau, the capital of the *province* with its over 500 000 inhabitants[105]).

When the first Russian troops had marched into the districts of Gross Wartenberg, Oels and Trebnitz on 20. to 21. January and the artillery could be already heard in Breslau, all women, children, sick and aged people were summoned to leave the town, and all available organizations assigned to carry out the evacuation[106]). Over 100 000 persons, mostly women, had to leave the town on foot, as there were not sufficient trains and motor vehicles to transport them. They dragged on, in the bitterest cold with only a little hand-baggage, for many kilometres along the roads to the south-west and west, but some of them discouraged by the cold, the harships and overcrowding of every kind of transport returned secretely to Breslau. When the Russian troops by the middle of February had encircled Breslau, which had been declared to be a fortress, there were still about 200 000 civilians in the town[107]), who during the long siege which followed endured bitter sufferings from air raids and the fighting[108]).

About 40 000 of these had probably been killed when the town capitulated on 6. to 7. May[109]).

On 8. February extensive Silesian territory also to the west of the Oder became involved in the fighting, thus causing new flights of refugees. And this happened, when the roads and railway lines from the industrial districts, from Breslau and the districts east of the Oder which led to the south and west, were still overcrowded with trains and treks, on their way to the Sudeten territory and Saxony.

After a short pause in the fighting on the Oder front during the first days of February the Soviet armies launched an attack on 8. February with strong forces on both sides of Breslau. In spite of the fierce defence of the Germans they succeeded in encircling Breslau, by means of a pincers advance from the bridge-heads at Brieg and Steinau. They then pushed forward west over the Bober. After heavy fighting they had, by the end of the month, occupied a broad strip, to the west of the Oder between the mouths of the Glatzer Neisse and the Lusatian Neisse.

In the course of this fighting, the Russian troops had succeeded, to the south and west of Breslau, in pushing forward as far as Grottkau, Strehlen, Striegau and Jauer. The population, on the banks of the Oder, had been partially evacuated beforehand[110]). Those who had remained behind often got involved in the fighting. Particularly in the district of Neumarkt, which had been involved in the fighting for the bridgehead at Steinau, and also in the districts of Ohlau, Brieg, Grottkau and Strehlen there were fierce battles, in the course of which many places changed hands several times. In spite of this, a great part of the population succeeded in fleeing from these places at the last moment —

The majority of the population of the rural districts of Breslau succeeded in trekking, before it was too late into the highlands of Glatz. In the district of Neumarkt only about 10% to 15% of the population remained behind, and most of them voluntarily. Most of them were brought by rail, by motor busses or with treks to the mountains or to Bohemia[111]). Many of them proceeded on their own to Saxony or Thuringia.

The inhabitants of the towns of Strehlen, Schweidnitz, Striegau and Jauer were also involved in this wave of flight, and joined those crowds pouring southwards into the highlands of Glatz or further on into Bohemia. The permission to evacuate was in some cases so long delayed by the Party, that many thousands, both from towns and villages, could not start before it was too late. The worst case was that of the town of Striegau. Here 15 000 people, that is to say a half of the inhabitants, were still in the town, when it was occupied by the Russians on 13. February[112]).

The front to the south west of Breslau remained unchanged until the beginning of May before the spurs of the mountains and along a line between Strehlen, Zobten and Striegau. Striegau was actually recaptured by German troops in the middle of March, and all that they found of the inhabitants who had remained behind were the dead ones. The others had been driven into territory further behind, which had been occupied by the Russians[113]).

During their attack of the middle of February the Soviet troops had won more ground in west Lower Silesia, in the Goverment district of Liegnitz, than in the sector of the front to the south of Breslau Between 8. and 25. February Russian troops had reached the Lusatian river Neisse, in spite of the desperate German counterattacks on the Bober. The result was a headlong evacuation and flight of the population even from the district of Görlitz.

Görlitz and its neighbourhood were not taken by the Russians until the beginning of May, but in February they occupied the territory lying further to the north and east between the Oder and Lusatian Neisse; these included the towns of Liegnitz, Goldberg, Löwenberg, Bunzlau and Sprottau, with the south Brandenburg district of Sorau. Only Glogau, which had been encircled on 12. February, after the whole civil population had been evacuated, held out until the end of March. The majority of the population of the town of Grünberg were able to get away in time by rail or by trekking; of the 35 000 inhabitants about 4 000 remained behind. In Liegnitz, however, which is the largest town in this territory after Görlitz[114]), there were about 20 000 people, that is about a quarter of the population, still there, when the Soviet troops marched in on 10. February.

The flight of the population was made very much more difficult, owing to the swiftness with which the Red Army advanced over the strip of country in the goverment district of Liegnitz, between the Oder and the Neisse. A further disadvantage was the fact that in this territory tens of thousands of refugees from the districts of Fraustadt, Guhrau, Wohlau, Militsch to the east of the Oder etc. were quartered or were passing through to Saxony.

As Lower Silesia was not so predominantly agricultural as Pomerania and East Prussia, there was a lack of horses and carts even in the villages, in order to prepare treks. There was in addition to this, as everywhere, the overcrowding of the railway and motorized transports. This explains the fact that many thousands of people remained behind and many treks were overtaken by the Russians. It can be safely assumed that, in the western sector of the district of Liegnitz, a quarter of the population could not get away in time, or remained voluntarily behind. These suffered awful fates when the Soviet troops marched in. Of those people who had made for Saxony thousands came, between 13. and 14. February, after having left their homes about 10. February, into the midst of the heavy bombardment of Dresden and died a terrible death there[115]).

During the months of March and April the fighting front in Lower Silesia remained fairly unchanged. However, a continual column of refugees poured out of the still unoccupied districts along the frontier between Silesia and Bohemia, and made for Bohemia. The German authorities demanded the evacuation of the mountainous country in the districts of Hirschberg, Landeshut and Glatz, for these places were overcrowded with refugees and their baggage.

The stream of refugees, in the direction of Sudeten territory, poured along roads and routes which had not been damaged by the fighting and which led from Hirschberg, Landeshut and Glatz over the mountains. Some refugees made their way separately or in treks as far as Bavaria.

The situatoin in Upper Silesia was quite different in the month of March. After the surrender of the industrial districts the Germans were able to hold the front along the Oder from the south of Oppeln as far as Ratibor.

On the 15. March, however, the Russians began a concentric attack on the west of Upper Silesia. This attack started from the area to the south of Breslau. As the result of long and hard fighting with the Germans, who put up a dogged resistance, the Russian troops succeeded in occupying, by the end of March, the parts of the districts of Grottkau, Cosel, Falkenberg, Neustadt and the greater part of the district of Neisse which they had up to then not got into their possession.

The result of the front on the Oder in this territory having remained so long unchanged was, that the population gradually became accustomed to its proximity, and therefore, the majority had remained in their homes, until just before the arrival of the Russians.

Even many of those who had been earlier evacuated from the localities along the Oder began to return. Then suddenly the fighting began again, as a result of the Russian attack from the north, and this led in the middle of March to a general flight of the west Upper Silesian population, with the result that all roads to the mountains were blocked, and that it was almost impossible to organize the treks of refugees and help them to get further. Thus, many treks were overtaken on the way by the Russians, although some succeeded in escaping[116]). Anyway the majority of the population of the town of Neisse succeeded in escaping, before it was too late, the town not being occupied by the Russians until the 24. March. Of about 40 000 inhabitants only about 2 000 remained behind[117]).

There may have been altogether about 300 000 to 400 000 people who escaped, by way of Troppau, Jägerndorf and Ziegenhals, from the parts of Upper Silesia west of the Oder to Bohemia and Moravia. On the other hand tens of thousands did not succeed in starting or were overtaken by the Red Army on their flight. The final stage of the flight of the population of Silesia began, just before the capitulation from 8. to 9 May. During these days the Red Army occupied the extensive territory of Lower Silesia which lies along the frontier between Silesia and Bohemia. In these mountainous parts of the county of Glatz of the Riesen- and Iser-Gebirge there were many tens of thousands of refugees who had come from Silesia, except those who had been directed to go to the Bohemian side and to the interior of the then Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. The population of these places in the mountains had experienced the incessant passage of refugees, and thus for weeks been witnesses of their distress. When, therefore, the order also to evacuate these parts was issued, at the beginning of May, and that, at a moment, when everyone could see that the collapse of Germany and the end of the war was at hand, the population carried out the order very unwillingly and great numbers remained behind. In some localities, for instance in the district of Landeshut, the order to evacuate did not even reach the different municipalities; others, such as the district of Glatz were not affected by the arrival of the Russian troops before the Armistice. It was only from the town of Hirschberg, that a great number of the population still fled over the mountains.

The mass of those who had remained behind, after the capitulation, were spared many of the atrocities which the population of other Silesian localities had suffered weeks and months before, when the Russian troops marched in.

There were, however, atrocities and excesses committed still during May in the mountainous places on the Silesian and Bohemian frontier.

A much worse fate was suffered by the hundreds of thousands, who had fled to Bohemia and Moravia, and experienceed the rising of the Czechs, in addition to the arrival of the Russians at the end of the war. It is true that the Czechs were chiefly enraged against the Sudeten Germans, but also the German refugees from Silesia, who were during the months of May and June in Czechoslavakia, were treated sadistically, in the course of the measures of revenge against the Germans. This treatment was often far worse than the brutal atrocities of the Soviet troops from which these people had fled[118]).

It is only possible to give an outline in approximate numbers of the flight of the Silesian population. The following gives us just an idea[119]):

German population of Silesia at beginning of 1945	4.7 million
Remained behind or overtaken on the way	1.5 million
Fled into Czechoslovakia	1.6 million
Fled into the territory of the *Reich* (Saxony, Thuringia, Bavaria)	1,6 million

Second Section

I. Excesses and atrocities of the Soviet troops when they marched into East Germany

The Germans from the east of the Oder and Neisse were made to suffer the vilest humiliations conceivable, when they first came into contact with the victorious Red Army. The shocking things they have suffered in their homes since 1945 make the expellees think again and again of the first days of their meeting with the Russian troops.

Therefore the entry of the Red Army is for so many of the personal reports concerning the expulsion the chief event and the one that throws everything else into the shade.

This was not a merely personal point of view, but is in accord with the horrible things which actually happened during these days. There were such masses of rapings of women, arbitrary murdering of numbers of Germans, such a number of robberies, so much maltreatment, and the similarity of these crimes was so constant, when the Red Army marched into the territory to the east of the Oder and Neisse, that it is impossible to pass them over when describing the expulsion.

We can leave it to the victims themselves, when reporting on their personal fates, to go into the details of what happened. They do this with an emphasis and precision which would be impossible for anyone telling the story afterwards. The historian must try, however, to make a general statement about these happenings, to show what is typical in them, and to throw light on the motives and propensities, calculated to explain in some degree the inconceivable cruelties and inhuman acts, inexplicable as they are.

1. The rapings of women

The women suffered in particular through the excesses of the Russians when they marched in. Among the numberless reports on the entry of the Red Army, there is scarcely a single one which does not tell of the raping of women and girls; in many there are frank reports of those who have themselves suffered it.

Even the most critical examination of the reports leaves no doubt about the fact, that the raping of German women and children by Soviet officers and men was systematic in the truest sense of the word, and that these were by no means isolated cases. This is proved by the fact that official searches were made for women, and that many women were repeatedly raped by a series of men, and that the rapings very often took place quite publicly. Even aged women and children were not spared, and this had a particularly repulsive and terrifying effect upon the German population. Apart from the physical and spiritual suffering inflicted upon the huge numbers of women raped, the brutality and shamelessness with which this was done increased the fear and terror of the German population.

It is clear that these rapings were the result of a manner of conduct and mentality, which are inconceivable and repulsive to the European mind. One must partially attribute them to the traditions and notions in the Asiatic parts of Russia, according to which women are just as much the booty of the victors, as jewellery, valuables, and property in dwellings and shops.

The nature and the huge number of rapings would be inconceivable, if there had not been a fundamental motive of such a kind, at the back of the minds of the Soviet troops The fact, that Soviet troops, of Asiatic origin, were the most unbridled and savage in these doings, proves that certain traits of Asiatic mentality conduced in a large degree to these excesses.

However, something else has to be taken into account. In soldiers' newspapers, circulars, and broadcastings for instance by the author Ilja Ehrenburg, the Soviet troops were called upon with brutal candour, before the offensive and also during the fighting, to take revenge upon the Germans. This is indisputably confirmed by letters which German troops captured from Russian soldiers, and by contemporary Soviet newspapers[120]). Exiled Russians have candidly stated, that some of the Soviet officers and men, particularly the confirmed Stalinists, were influenced, by this hate propaganda of Ilja Ehrenburg and other Soviet journalists, to regard the violation of German women as an act of revenge against the Germans[121]). This is the only explanation for the fact, that in many cases the Soviet soldiers were not satisfied with only raping the women, but afterwards often killed them and in some cases even mutilated them in a sadistic manner. Much of this may be put down to the account of the licentiousness caused by the war. In their entirety, however, these things can be neither explained nor excused in this way. It is also a fact that during the first weeks of the occupation of German territory the Soviet High Command and the leaders of units took no steps against the innumerable rapings of German women, that is to say this was tolerated if not actually encouraged by them[122]).

In order to be fair in our report, we will not hide the fact that among the Russian officers and soldiers there were a considerable number who did not participate in the excesses; some of these actually offered their protection to women and girls, and even prevented many such a crime, by their own personal and energetic intervention. These men are worthy of particular praise[123]). In spite of these noble exceptions it remains a fact that raping of women was one of the most general and disgusting offences committed in the course of the expulsion.

One of the results of these crimes was that great numbers of German women were ruined for their whole lives by venereal diseases and other physical damage, and further that spiritual depression and desperation accompanied by a gloomy fatalism spread amongst them. Many such women preferred suicide to being repeatedly raped. Many are still suffering to-day from the spiritual after-effects of the terror and dishonour.

2. The Murdering of East German Civilians

In addition to the unbridled excesses against women and girls there were great numbers of "liquidations" and brutal murders of civilians in the towns and villages of East Germany, immediately after the Red Army marched in. These were as a rule procedures without any kind of formal judicial decision; they were in fact executions based on mere suspicion or unfounded accusations. They were too often also arbitrary acts of single Soviet soldiers.

In spite of the varied nature of what was done the procedure of the Soviet troops gives evidence of certain fundamentals, which compel one to infer general motives. For when the Soviet troops marched in, the people who were arbitrarily murdered were first of all prominent members of the Party or of definite National Socialist organizations. It often happened that mayors, higher employees of the civil administration and also members of the police were treated in the same way as local leaders of the Party, local leaders of the farmers, the *SA* and *SS*. The Soviet authorities obviously assumed that they were all leading functionaries of the National Socialist Party124).

Those persons, who were either rightly or wrongly considered by the Russian troops to be prominent members of the National Socialist Party, were mostly shot summarily without any further procedure at all. This was different from the way in which members of the Party were later on dealt with by the Russian and Polish Military administration. Almost everywhere in the villages and towns of East Germany numbers of people were in this way murdered, in some places more than in others. It was obvious that the political commissioners attached to the Soviet units had accused the murdered persons.

It is a fact that many of the people executed in this way had had nothing to do with criminal measures of the National Socialist regime. The reason for this was that the Russian commissioners very often had a thoroughly wrong notion of the competence and responsibility of the different National Socialist functionaries and organizations. The ignorance or wantoness of the Russians in this respect is demontrated by the fact, that railway officials, firemen and other uniformed members of the public service were often regarded as members of National Socialist or military organizations and were shot without any further enquiry. The Soviet troops proceeded in the same way against those in whose dwellings weapons or pieces of uniforms had been found. In many such cases mere appearances and the smallest suspicion were enough to have people executed.

In this repect the Soviet troops were often influenced by the suspicion that the Germans found in their homes were guerillas who had been left there with secret instructions. Undoubtedly this suspicion was encouraged by the official German announcements, concerning the *Werwolf* organizations, and also by the well organized guerillas, by means of whom the Soviets had fought German troops in Russia. Nevertheless the suspicion was totally unfounded in view of the general terror and intimidation of the Germans who had remained behind. It often happened, during the first weeks of the Soviet advance into East Germany, that particularly men were summarily shot, on the ground of something which merely appeared to be suspicious to distrustful Soviet soldiers.

Other motives also played a part in the shooting of Germans, when the Soviet Army marched in Often the hatred against "capitalists", which dates back to the Russian revolution led to such murders[125]). As not only large estate owners and industrialists but also lower class people, if they only possessed a house, were "capitalists" in the eyes of the Soviet soldiers, they were all hated without discrimination, whether they were owners of estates and businesses, or civil servants, employees and even workmen. The great numbers of owners of estates in East Germany were viewed in a particularly bad light by the Russians, owing to the fact that numerous Russian prisoners of war and civil workers had been employed by them during the war. The evidence of these Russian or Polish civil workers or prisoners of war was therefore, often decisive in a good or bad way for the fate of the estate owners and their families. The slightest accusation of bad treatment cost many an estate owner or farmer his life. On the other hand favourable evidence often worked miracles.

Further very many other instances of shooting show that the murdering of Germans must be ascribed to the strangely naive temperament of the Russians which leads to sudden and arbitrary actions. This irresponsibility was the more fatal in the days of the advance of the Soviet troops, because great numbers of them were almost always under the influence of alcohol. The continual drinking bouts ended almost always not only in the raping of women but also in the murdering of innocent Germans who were mostly guilty of no offence at all. And also when they were sober, it was characteristic of many Russian soldiers that they handled their arms like children and were always ready to shoot at and to shoot people. This cost many unsuspecting Germans their lives[126]).

It often happened, that men who resisted the violation of their wives, mothers and daughters were brutally shot. This also happened to women, who did not want to give in, and to old and weak women who could not fulfil what was demanded of them. In different cases quite trivial things, such as very often misunderstandings owing to the language, were the cause of the firearm being used.

It must be regarded as a characteristic of these doings that contrary to the later Polish excesses, the hatred of the Germans was not so much because of their nationality, but was due to revolutionary, Communist, or Anti-Fascist feelings. In some cases the cause was the naive arbitrary desire of the individual Russian officer or soldier to glorify himself.

It is not yet possible to draw up statistics of the victims who were murdered in East German territories, when the Red Army was marching in. Systematic enquiries and investigations, the results of which we already have for a great number of East Prussian and East Pomeranian rural municipalities, render it possible, however, to draw inferences in regard to the probable total of these losses[127]).

The unanimous view which has resulted is that on an average 2% to 3% of the German population, from the territories east of the Oder and Neisse, who had remained behind, were shot, or murdered in other ways after the Russian occupation. That would mean that altogether about 75,000 to 100,000 people from East Germany perished in this way by violence.

3. Plunderings and Incendiarism

In addition to the rapings of women and the shootings, of which mostly men were the victims, there were also other excesses which none of the Germans who had remained behind escaped. Perhaps in some cases these were not so serious, but considering their generality all the German public had to suffer severely from them.

The chief of these were the ceaseless plundering and robberies, which began as soon as the Red Army marched in, and lasted for a long time during the Russian occupation. The East German population became impoverished by these continual robberies of their property.

It must be assumed that this was all systematically planned, for the enormous amount of plundering in the very first days, after the capture of the East German towns and villages, was carried out with systematic thoroughness. Not only did the Soviet commanders let their soldiers do this, but they clearly encouraged them to enrich themselves from German property, or even resorted to meassures to facilitate the plunderings[128]).

This intention to plunder was also very evident from the fact that, in larger places such as Königsberg, Elbing and Danzig, also particularly in Pomeranian towns the population were continually driven about for days at a time in the neighbourhood after the entry of the Russians[129]). Altough these temporary expulsions may in some cases have been necessary, owing to the proximity of the front or for other reasons such as interrogations and registrations, the chief purpose was obviously to leave property free for confiscation and appropriation by the Russian troops, through temporarily removing the population from their dwellings. In connection with these actions there was no doubt the idea, that the single Russian soldier should, in his own way, cause the Germans to pay reparations.

The avidity for goods on the part of people who came from a land, in which for decades there had been an enormous lack of consumer goods, was calculated to increase the ideological hatred of all those possessing property and to cause robberies, or finally systematic destruction, the results of which were much more fearful.

Many personal reports give us a picture not only of robbery and plundering, but also of malicious and reckless acts of destruction, incendiarism in flats and houses, and even of the burning down of whole places and portions of towns.

A great number of flats and houses were empty, when East German *Provinzes* were captured. There was, therefore, nothing to prevent the Soviet troops from plundering and indulging their fury to their heart's content.

Those Germans, who returned from the flight, generally found their dwellings in a state of ruin, particularly in cases when the Soviet troops found out that the owner of any house was a National Socialist, or when they found National Socialist emblems, pictures of German soldiers or of Hitler in the deserted houses. They vented their rage against the absent owners on their homes and houses, which were mostly not only devastated but also set fire to. The fact that places had been left alone led to no steps being taken to put out the fire of single houses, which were burning, but also to this spreading to whole rows of streets and sections of towns. There were, therefore, an enormous number of fires. Often one cannot help gaining the impression that the houses were systmatically set fire to, in order not only to burn up single buildings but also entire localities.

Thus there were many estates, villages and towns completely or partially destroyed by fire, in all German provinces to the east of the Oder and Neisse, and particularly in Pomerania, after the Russians marched in[130]). Among the large cities, Danzig in particular was in a large degree destroyed by fire. The fires had been started with premeditation at different points, and then spread further, without anyone taking steps to put them out.

It has been proved that, when the Red Army marched into East Germany, greater damage was caused by such destructions and incendiarism than by bombardements and fighting[131]).

4. Summary

When we make a summary survey of the main features characterizing the innumerable excesses, committed by the Red Army against the East German population and their property, the striking feature is that which categorizes this action in types. We must not, however, overlook the fact that what was done varied according to locality, circumstances and time.

In the larger towns, in which there was still a comparatively high number of Germans, the excesses were naturally distributed over a greater number. The result was that individuals did not always suffer in the same degree, and many of them less than in villages, in which large Russian units were quartered. The fact that the inhabitants of a town are not so well known to one another, as in the country, made denunciations on the part of Polish and Russian civilian workers, or even of ill-disposed German neighbours more difficult than in the country.

Moreover the fact, that towns such as Königsberg, Breslau and Danzig are scattered over wider areas, made it easier to find refuge and hiding places there.

In villages and small country towns, the numbers of those who had to suffer, when the Russians marched in, depended chiefly upon whether large bodies of Russian troops or only small units came. Generally it was not the fighting troops, who were still in action, but the re-enforcements and the reserves who committed the worst excesses. It was particularly fatal when Russian troops fell in with treks on highways[132]). In such cases the refugees sometimes landed in the midst of battles between Russian and German troops; but even if they were spared this, the arrival of Russian panzer caused terrible havoc among treks: horses and carts were run over by the panzer, people shot and baggage plundered.

The course of events, when Russian troops were met with, was also determined by the time when this occurred. Generally speaking worse excesses were committed during the first weeks of the Soviet advance, in January and February 1945, than in the last weeks before the armistice in April and May. In the territories of East Germany, which were first occupied by Russian troops, that is to say in East Brandenburg, the southern districts of East Pomerania, in many parts of East Prussia and in Upper Silesia the number of people shot was greater, the general conduct of the Russian troops more unbridled and violent than in the mountainous outskirts of Silesia, which were not occupied by the Russians until May.

It is also a fact that the population of Danzig and Königsberg had to suffer more excesses than that of Breslau which held out until 6. May. It may be that the origin of the troops, their standard of civilization, and the attitude of their commanders had something to do with this.

It is difficult to say whether the fanaticism of the Russian troops had later on somewhat cooled off, when we compare their later actions with such cruel excesses as those of Nemmersdorf in East Prussia, in October 1944, and of Metgethen near Königsberg, in February 1945. It is sure that the Soviet leaders showed a tendency to prevent excesses after the first weeks of the invasion; they did this, because such excesses, if continued, could not fail to undermine the discipline of the Army. Also the problem of the effects on the morale of Communist soldiers, caused by a too close contact with the capitalist world, may have played a part. From about March 1945 the Red Army was no longer called upon to take revenge, and, instead of that, orders were daily issued and circulars distributed calling upon them to observe discipline[133]).

Nevertheless the occupation of East German territories, also from March until May 1945, was accompanied by very cruel suffering for the civilian population. Alone the number and degree of the excesses and atrocities was slightly less, so far as we can judge from reports. Specially blatant cases are not so often reported. It was, however, not until the armistice that there was any perceptible alleviation for the German civilian population.

II. The return of parts of the refugee population at the end of the fighting

All German refugees who had fled from their homes in East Germany owing to terror of the Red Army, at the beginning of 1945, imagined, that they would soon be able to return home, when everything was over. Some may have thought, that there would be a change in the military situation, such as the propaganda of the Party persistently prophesied. Others, no doubt, clearly saw that the invasion of the Red Army was the beginning of the end of the war, and probably hoped that things would again become normal, and that they would soon return home.

The great majority of the refugees had certainly no clear idea of how and when they would return. But they believed firmly in this return, because they simply could not imagine that it would be otherwise, or that the flight was the first step to a permanent removal from their homes. Many refugees were so far misled on the flight by the idea of a quick return, that they only went so far from their native places, as the position of the fighting front made it absolutely necessary to do. Many a trek was overtaken by Soviet troops as a result of such repeated halting. The experiences derived from the German collapse in May 1945 showed, that the refugees were making a great mistake, when they imagined they would return peacefully to the homes they had left, on their flight from the Red Army. Those east German refugees, who were caught by the advancing Russian troops, either during their flight or shortly after they had started, or even after trekking for days, were in particular made to feel how small were the chances of returning home, at the end of the fighting

The very few, who did succeed in returning at all, were beaten, robbed and outraged creatures They were tired to death and desperate, and their one hope was to find some comfort in their native locality. In this, however, they met with disappointment and found no home any longer there, but destroyed and burnt out dwellings, in the midst of desolation.

Also the numerous east German refugees, who reached central Germany, the west of the *Reich*, Bohemia and Moravia, or Denmark, soon found out, after the collapse of the *Reich*, that the end of the war did not mean return for them, but that many barriers had been erected between them and their homes. The division of Germany into different zones of occupation rendered it almost impossible for the refugees to travel the distance from Schleswig-Holstein to East Prussia, or from Bavaria to Silesia. Later on a return was rendered totally impossible, by measures of the Occupying Powers, or of the Poles who had forced their way into East Germany, and above all by the stipulations of the Potsdam Conference.

Considering all this and what became known in Central and West Germany, about the terrible conduct of Soviet troops and Polish militia in East Germany, it is a marvel that many refugees risked going over the Oder and Neisse to the east. The only explanation is, that many refugees from East Germany were overwhelmed by a longing for home, stronger than considerations of reason and such like objections. For this was a time, when everyone longed for home after the long war, those bombed out for their destroyed towns, and the discharged prisoners of war for their families etc., etc.

When considering the return of refugees from the other side of the Oder and Neisse, we must distinguish between those, who had not left East Germany, and the east Germans who had found refuge outside of the Oder and Neisse territories. For the return of the former amounted merely to a migration from one *Provinz* to another within the territory east of the Oder and Neisse, whereas the return of the latter led to an actual increase of the German population to the east of the Oder and Neisse, and which had already shrunk owing to the flight.

The return of refugees within the Oder and Neisse territory began very early. For in the Polish parts, in East Prussia, in East Brandenburg, in parts of West Prussia and in the southern strips of East Pomerania, thousands began to return from the end of January. The reason was, that the swift advance of the Russians had made further flight impossible[134]). A new wave of return followed, particularly in March, when numbers of East Prussian and West Prussian refugees returned home from East Pomerania and Danzig. At the same time the inhabitants of East Pomerania, who had been overtaken by the Russians on the flight, tried to return home.

A return of east Germans from places outside the Oder and Neisse territories did not, however, take place until after the armistice. And this was mostly from reception places in Bohemia and Central Germany, which had already been occupied by the Russians at the end of the war or were later transferred to them. The Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia was the last territory under German rule to be occupied by the Russians. It had been particularly important as a reception land for hundreds of thousands of Silesian refugees.

The majority of the refugees here came finally into the hands of the Russians, for the major part of Bohemia and Moravia was occupied by the Russians either immediately before or soon after the capitulation of Germany. Only a narrow strip along the Bavarian frontier was taken over by American troops. Nothing remained for the numerous Silesian refugees but to return home, after they had fallen into the hands of the Russians in Bohemia and Moravia. For the Czech authorities and militia adopted the very severest measures for the removal of German refugees[135]). The east German refugees in Central Germany were in a similar position For almost all Saxony and the whole of the territory of Brandenburg, along with Berlin, Hither-Pomerania and Mecklenburg had been captured by the Red Army, during the last weeks preceding the armistice. Later, at the end of June 1945, also the western part of the Land, and the *Provinz* of Saxony, and Thuringia were exchanged for West Berlin and came under the administration of the Soviet Occupation. All the refugees from East Prussia, Silesia, East Pomerania and East Brandenburg, who were in these parts of Central Germany, were thus in the situation of having left their homes, because of the Red Army, without having escaped from the rule of the Soviets. Many of them, therefore, wanted to return home, more especially as they heard that the troops in the Soviet Occupied Territory were much better disciplined since the armistice than before. These refugees, therefore, thought that this would also be the case in their homes to the east of the Oder and Neisse.

The attitude of the Russian military commanders and administration, at the different places, to the return of the refugees was not always the same. The treks of refugees, who had on their way fallen into the hands of the Russians, were in many cases forced to return immediately, or they were at least allowed to do so. In other cases the Russians troubled little about them, left them where they were, registered them at their places of refuge and treated them like the native population.

It was obviously the original intention of the Russian command, that the population should return, at least temporarily, to their homes in all German and Non-German territories which had been occupied by the Russian forces in 1945. This was in order to prevent large crowds of refugees collecting together and to have the population under better control. There may also have been the intention, at the back of the minds of the Russians, to establish, for military reasons, at least apparent order, or to sift the population politically.

Measures of this sort had by no means anything to do with the fundamental attitude of the Soviet policy towards the expulsion. The latter was on principle their final aim, which, in some places, was hidden for practical considerations. This is to be observed, in the varied attitude of the Soviets to the expulsions carried out by the Polish authorities, before the Potsdam Agreement. These expulsions were in certain individual cases prevented by the Russians, on the ground of special interests, they were, however, generally sanctioned on principle[136]).

In other cases the attitude of the Russians was also obscure and contradictory. Thus a great number of refugees, in the Soviet zone, who had been ordered by the competent Soviet commanders and the German authorities, subordinate to them, to return home[137]) or had already begun to do so on their own, were turned back before crossing the Oder and Neisse and not allowed to do so.

In this way, there arose very great confusion in the area of Görlitz. There the crossing of the Neisse into Silesia was prohibited from the end of May by Polish militia units and by the Polish administration which had been set up east of the Neisse. The result was that great crowds of returning refugees were packed together, on the western bank and in the town of Görlitz itself. The distress caused was inconceivable and beyond bounds, for at the same time those who had been compulsorily and suddenly driven out of the east by the Poles came over the Neisse to the West[138]).

Likewise at the end of June and the beginning of July 1945 it was everywhere forbidden to cross the Oder and Neisse to the east, while at the same time the first wave of expellees was arriving from the east. The result was that for weeks huge masses of homeless people, coming from the wide stretch of land between Silesia and Stettin, were crowded together on the western banks of the Oder and Neisse.

Also the movement of the population from one German *Provinz* to the other east of the Oder and Neisse, which was caused by the desire of the refugees to return home, was in many ways hindered or prevented by the interference of Russian troops. Return was often rendered impossible by the fact, that all Germans were subject to forced labour, during the weeks after the occupation. Whether refugees or natives, the Germans met in the villages and towns were forced to work on the removal of ruins, on tilling the fields, on the removal of railway lines and on other dismantling work and services for the Soviet troops[139]).

In this way the return of many refugees was stopped. Even those, who were not affected by this or had secretly begun to return, had to reckon with being caught on the way and compelled to do some kind of forced work.

Many refugees required months to reach their homes, and it is a general fact that the return far surpassed the previous flight in hardships and dangers[140]). As railway traffic was in general at a standstill, and the treks had been mostly robbed of their horses and the baggage repeatedly plundered, the refugees generally tramped with little baggage along the highways. They were in constant fear of Russian troops and Polish militia. The way passed through places which had been shot to pieces and burned down, and along highways where the carcasses of animals and the corpses of soldiers and civilians were still lying. People died of hunger and thirst, and if the refugees actually reached their homes they generally found their dwellings plundered, if not burned down, or in many cases occupied by Russian troops.

The general insecurity and the hardships which were to be expected on the way home prevented many refugees from beginning to return, immediately after the Soviet troops had marched in. This particularly applies to great numbers of East Prussian refugees who had been overtaken, by Russian troops in Pomerania. When they fell into the hands of the Russians in Pomerania, most of them had behind them a long trek of six to eight weeks which was full of dangers, and which had inflicted on them the greatest spiritual and bodily suffering. They, therefore, shunned the hundreds of kilometers long return, because they feared being robbed on the way of their last belongings, and could not be sure that they would reach their homes.

As Polish authorities had already taken over the administration in parts of Pomerania and the Polish militia was continually receiving more authority, these refugees, also as a result of their experience after the First World War, could not but fear the worst for their East Prussian homes which were still further to the east. Here the fact must be mentioned, which was at the time unknown to most Germans, that the representatives of the British, the American and the Russian governments at the Conference of Yalta had declared that a considerable amount of land must be ceded to Poland in the north and west[141]).

Similar considerations also influenced the great majority of those who had succeeded in reaching the central and western territory of the *Reich*. Their standpoint was that, after they had succeeded in escaping from the Russians, they should wait and see what was done with their homes, and not frivolously risk their lives and the few belongings they had saved. Most of the refugees in the Soviet, American, English and French zones of occupation were deterred from immediately beginning to return to their homes by the news that it was forbidden to cross the Oder and Neisse to the east, that Germans were being persecuted in the eastern territories and that the expulsions had begun in June 1945.

Further the establishment of zones of occupation had, from a purely technical point of view, made a return from the American, the British and French zones to the east practically impossible. For the zone frontiers, as also the orders of all the Occupation Powers had prevented freedom of travelling through Germany. It was only out of the territory of the Soviet zone that greater numbers of refugees were allowed to pass over the Oder and Neisse to the east, shortly after the armistice. In Mecklenburg and the western part of Pomerania it was particularly East Pomeranians who began to return home, and in Saxony Silesians. Some of them were called upon by the Soviet commanders or German mayors to return home, and some of them began to do so on their own.

It may be estimated that 300,000 to 400,000 refugees had returned from the Soviet zone to their homes east of the Oder and Neisse, before the Poles stopped the flood of those returning at the end of June 1945. The return of refugees to East Germany practically ended, when the Great Powers decided at Potsdam that the east German population was to be expelled. The number of those who returned home, after the armistice, from Czechoslovakia, was considerably higher than the number of those from the Soviet zone of occupation. About 1.6 million Germans had been driven by the advance of the Red Army from Silesia into Bohemia and Moravia[142]). About a half of them had found refuge in the strips of the Sudetenland, which immediately bordered on Silesia. In the German parts of the Sudetenland, from Troppau in the south to Reichenberg in the north, there was consequently an enormous concentration of Silesian refugees. Some of these had received private quarters and some of them emergency accomodation in camps. As the stream of refugees continued to pour out of Silesia, there were further hundreds of thousands in the parts of the Sudetenland bordering on Saxony or in the interior of Bohemia; many had also passed direct through Bohemia to Bavaria.

The situation of the Silesian refugees at the time of the capitulation varied very much, according to the locality in which they were. Those who had poured into Bavaria were happy, that they were no longer in the territory of Czechoslovakia, but it was almost impossible for them to return to Silesia, because of the occupation frontiers in Germany. It was necessary for many others who were in the Sudetenland, or in the interior of Bohemia, to leave this territory as soon as possible, as after the armistice the Germans were being persecuted and interned everywhere in Czechoslovakia[143]). The Czech authorities at once took measures not only to expel the many German refugees from Silesia but also those from Slovakia, from Hungary and Romania who had sought refuge in Bohemia and Moravia. Many Silesians had already set out on their own for home when the war was at an end; the rest were sent during the next days partly on foot and partly by rail as quickly as possible across the frontier. On their return through the territory of Czechoslovakia they were subjected to continual molestations, in which Russian soldiers and Czech militia participated, each according to their own methods[144]).

When expelling the German refugees from Czech territory the Czech authorities did not consider whether it was really possible for the Silesians to return to their homes. Those of them who were in the neighbourhood of Prague and in the interior of Bohemia were first of all put into camps and then transported by the shortest way to Saxony. The Silesians, who were found in the northern parts of the Sudetenland between Eger and Reichenberg were likewise driven over into Saxony. In view of the general fear of Czech persecution, these people wanted to pass over the Czech frontier as quickly as possible[145]). As some of them were refused food coupons[146]) in Saxony and were not allowed to remain there, they tried to return to Silesia, but only a few succeeded in doing so, because, as we have already stated, the crossing of the Neisse at Görlitz had been prohibited for refugees from 1. June.

The shortest way out of Czechoslovakia for those Silesians, who were in the western part of Bohemia, when the armistice was declared, was into Bavaria. This way was also the least dangerous, because this part of Bohemia was not occupied by Russian but by American troops, and the refugees could consequently avoid contact with Russian troops.

The return to Silesia was not prohibited for those, who had found refuge in the eastern part of Bohemia. This was, however, only about a half of all those who had fled from the Red Army out of Silesia, across the mountains; it may be estimated that these amounted to 800 000. The Poles could not stop the stream of returning refugees on the frontier between Silesia and Czechoslovakia as at the Oder and Neisse, because they must show consideration for the Czechs. The result was that, immediately after the armistice on 9. May, an enormous stream of refugees began to pour over the mountains between Bohemia and Silesia. They went the same way by which they had previously fled from the Russians. The only difference was that the refugees had become much poorer, and most of them had to walk, as the Russians and Czechs had stolen their horses and carts and a considerable part of their baggage. This stream of people back to Upper and Lower Silesia continued until the middle of June. The villages and towns of Silesia, some of which were completely empty, were again full of people. They had again 50% of their previous number of population, when the return movement of refugees ended in July. Together with the approximate 200,000 Silesians, who had succeeded in crossing the Neisse, there were about a million people, who again returned to Silesia in May and June 1945. The German population of Silesia (frontier of 1937) had, therefore, again reached about 2.5 million[147]). The number of the German population which was living here under the rule of the Russians and Poles was, therefore, very high. Also in East Pomerania the number of Germans living under Russian rule was relatively high. This was not really due to the return of refugees. For, as a result of the Polish blocking measures on the Oder, only about 150 000 East Pomeranians returned during the months of May and June from Mecklenburg and Hither-Pomerania. This was, however, counterbalanced by the departure of numerous East Prussians and West Prussians who returned home again from East Pomerania. Contrary to other provinces, however, the number of East Pomeranians who had remained behind and not got out in time was very high. There were, therefore, about a million people in East Pomerania in June 1945, before the expulsion first began. The towns and villages had, on an average, 50% to 60% of their previous population. There lived in them about 150 000 to 250 000 Germans from East and West Prussia, and from the Polish territories, who had not returned home, but were awaiting their fate in East Pomerania[148]). The density of the population in the different parts of East Pomerania varied very much, and depended upon what possibilities of flight there had been in January and March[149]). Whereas comparatively few Germans were still living in the western districts of Pyritz, Greifenhagen, Naugard, Cammin and in the seaports of Kolberg and Stolpmünde, the population was in some cases over 75 % of its previous number in other districts, in the neighbourhood of Belgard, Köslin, Neustettin, Deutsch Krone, Friedeberg, Stolp and Lauenburg[150]).

The number of the population was lowest in East Prussia during the summer of 1945. About 500 000 inhabitants of the government districts of Gumbinnen, Königsberg and Allenstein had fallen into the hand of the Russians[151]). Further in the neighbouring districts to the west of Elbing, Marienburg, Stuhm, Marienwerder and Rosenberg almost 100 000 Germans remained behind, when the Red Army marched in, or returned later on. Together with the approximately 200 000, who returned, mostly out of Pomerania, to East Prussia, some of them in March and April and others not until the capitulation, East Prussia (frontiers of 1937) had a population of about 800 000 in June 1945; that is to say scarcely a third of its population in the year 1944[152]). The least dense population was in the eastern districts, in the government district of Gumbinnen. There the territory which the Russians took over was almost uninhabited, and that although many Germans were, as early as February, compulsorily deported there, after having been captured in Samland by the Russians[153]). The German population in the eastern part of East Prussia, which was under Russian and Polish administration, scarcely amounted to 15% of its original number. The number of the Germans on the other hand was far greater in the southern and central districts of East Prussia. The towns of Osterode, Allenstein, Mohrungen, Sensburg, Bartenstein, Heilsberg, Lötzen and the neighbouring rural municipalities had in the summer of 1945 half of their old population. The mass of the Germans living at this time in East Prussia, which numbered between 500,000 and 550,000 was spread over the southern districts, which were destined to come under Polish administration in accordance with the Agreement of Potsdam. On the other hand, in the northern part of East Prussia which came under Russian administration there were only about 250,000 to 300,000 people including Königsberg[154]).

The number of the German inhabitants in East Brandenburg, which was a comparatively small *Provinz,* was only slightly increased by returning refugees. For the majority of the Germans had been compelled to leave their homes here by systematic expulsions, at the end of June. Before this expulsion began, there were, however, still about 350 000 people there, because the majoritiy of the population had not been able to flee in time.

It was only in Danzig, West Prussia and the western and central Polish territories that the number of returning refugees was very small. The Germans, who were in these parts in May and June 1945, were chiefly persons, who had voluntarily remained there or had been captured by the Russians during their flight. There were in the district of the Free City of Danzig about 200,000 Germans and on Polish territory about 800,000, who experienced the time of Polish rule and expulsion in their homes.

Changes in German population east of the Oder and Neisse as a result of the flight and the return of refugees in 1945[155]):

Districts east of the Oder and Neisse	Population end of 1944	Population after flight from Red Army April—May 1945	Population after return (summer 1945) and before expulsion
East Prussia[156])	2 653 000	600 000	800 000
East Pomerania	1 861 000	1 000 000	1 000 000[157])
East Brandenburg	660 000	300 000	350 000
Silesia	4 718 000	1 500 000	2 500 000
Polish territories	1 612 000	800 000	800 000
Danzig	420 000	200 000	200 000
Total	11 924 000	4 400 000	5 650 000

III. The forced deportation of East German civilians into the Soviet Union

The fate of those men and women from the territories east of the Oder and Neisse, who were taken prisoner by the Red Army when it marched in and deported to the Soviet Union, must be treated separately from the development of things in East Germany. They were often deported thousands of kilometres away from their relatives who had to remain in East Germany. The fate of these deported persons was hard and bitter.

The shootings and other acts of violence and excesses were, in a large measure, arbitrary acts on the part of individual Soviet officers and soldiers. This was not so in the case of the deported East German civilians, for this was a systematic procedure which had been planned by the Soviet Supreme Command, and which was carried out in the same way in all Soviet army commands to the east of the Oder and the Neisse. The fact that this action was centrally organized and planned by the Soviet command is evident, because as early as December 1944, many thousands of ethnic Germans in Romania, Hungary and Yugoslavia were driven together and deported to Russia. Most of these people came into the industrial district of the Donez and the Don, or to the Ural mountains, or to the Caucasus.

The deportation of civilians was carried out individually at the end of January 1945 in the German territories to the east of the Oder and Neisse. This action was then continued systematically during the month of February, in all districts which had been already occupied by the Red Army.

The Conference of Yalta (4. to 11. February 1945) took place during the time when the deportations in East Germany were beginning. At this conference Stalin succeeded in obtaining the agreement of the Western Powers, to the Soviet Union being allowed to bring workers from Germany to Russia, as a part of the reparations after Germany had been conquered[158]). This Inter-

Allied agreement was, as a matter of fact, come to, when the deportations in the south-east had been almost completed, and when many thousands of Germans from the territories to the east of the Oder and Neisse were already on their way to the Soviet Union. The agreement, however, constituted a kind of legal basis, by which the Soviets could justify the deportation of large numbers of the German people.

The deportations from East Germany reached their climax in March 1945, and continued until the end of April. As up to this time only the districts to the east of the Oder and Neisse were in the hands of the Red Army, the deportation was limited to Germans in this territory, and did not spread to the Soviet zone which was established later[159]).

The army groups of the Red Army organized the deportations. These deportations generally began in the different territories, two to three weeks after they had been occupied. Each of the four Soviet army groups, engaged in the occupation of East Germany arrested Germans in their areas, and delivered them into transition and assembly camps. The procedure adopted shows, that it was not so much based on a plan for the deportation of definite persons and groups of persons, but that the intention was to drive together, like cattle, a maximum number of able-bodied German workers in a minimum of time. For it was clear that each of the four Soviet army groups had been made responsible for achieving an equally "high quota of deportation". The Soviet procedure evinced very different degrees of hardship, because the number of Germans, who had fallen into the hands of the Russians in the *Provinzes* to the east of the Oder and Neisse, varied very much locally and many places had been occupied by the Russians as early as January and February, and others not before the deportations were at an end.

The different army groups included the following parts of the territory to the east of the Oder and Neisse[160]). East Prussia with the exception of the strip of land to the west of a line between Elbing and Deutsch Eylau belonged to the Army Group Chernyakovski. Insterburg was the chief assembly camp in this area for the Germans who were to be deported, and from its railway station the transports proceeded to Russia[161]).

The Army Group Rokossovski included the western part of East Prussia, all West Prussia and the eastern corner of Pomerania, as far as a line between Köslin and Flatow. The chief assembly camps for the deportation were first of all Zichenau[162]) and Soldau[163]), but from the middle of March Graudenz[164]) which had not been captured until 5. March.

To the south of this group and bordering on it was the army group of Shukoff to which belonged West Poland, East Brandenburg and the western half of East Pomerania. The chief assembly camps and points of departure for the transports were Schwiebus in Brandenburg, Posen and Sikawa near Lodz.

The Army Group Konieff was the last one and included all Silesia and South Poland. In the Upper Silesian industrial district the assembly points for the deportations were the camp in Beuthen and the goods railway station in Peiskretscham also there were camps for this purpose in Cracow[165]) and in Sanoc and Sombar which were situated in the locality of Przemysl.

The places for collecting those to be deported were mostly penitentiaries and prisons, also barracks or hutments. The conditions of arrest were generally the same everywhere. The able-bodied men and women of a place or a whole district suddenly received an order to report themselves, at a definite time and at a definite place. From there began the transport or march to the next assembly camp. There then followed further assemblies and dispatches to the chief camps, here there was a superficial medical examination of those to be deported, who were then put into Russian goods trains.

The calling up and arresting of the people to be transported was for the most part, particularly in the towns, carried out by proclamations that all men up to the age of sixty had to report themselves. In many localities the deportation was carried out jointly with the registration of the German population[166]). This registration was carried out in the different parts in the weeks immediately following the occupation. As, however, extensive territories, particularly in the country, could not be got at in this way, special Soviet army commandos were formed who received orders to drive together like cattle a definite number of able-bodied German persons and to bring them into the assembly camps. These commandos, instead of examining a locality systematically, often drove almost all adult German persons together from different villages, in order to carry out their work quickly, and completely failed to concern themselves with other places.

The work of the deportation commandos was easiest in Upper Silesia. In this district there were great numbers of miners and industrial workers who had not been called up for military service, because they were indispensable for war work; for the same reason they had been forbidden to flee. The result was, that in Gleiwitz, Beuthen, Hindenburg and other industrial towns all males between 17 and 50 years of age were interned, shortly after the Russians marched in. A considerable number of them were deported to Russia via Beuthen, Peiskretscham or Cracow[167]).

As Silesia was the most densely populated of the German east provinces, also after the entry of the Red Army, the Russian military administration found people enough here, in order to fulfil its "deportation quota". The Army Group of Konieff, which had Silesia under it, was, therefore, at the head of the military areas in East Germany. This Army Group deported about 62 000 persons, of whom the vast majority were males.

The situation was quite different in other areas, and particularly so in East Prussia[168]). There the Soviet deportation commandos resorted to the most drastic measures, in order to fulfil their quota of deportation. In East Prussia it was mostly women and girls from 15 to 50 years old who were seized and delivered into the assembly camp in Insterburg[169]). The reason for this was that there were scarcely any able-bodied men in the *Provinz*, and the population of Königsberg did not come into consideration, as the battle for the town was still going on, during the main deportation time in February and March. In the course of this deportation it often happened, that numbers of mothers were separated from their little children, and that even aged people were deported[170]). All the same, the number of those deported from East Prussia, which was under the Army Group Chernyakovski, was much less than those deported by other army groups.

Comprehensive investigations, into how many German civilians were deported by the different army groups to Russia and into what was the total of those deported, have up to date lead to the following figures[171]):

Number of deported civilians

From Silesia (Army Group Konieff)	62 000
From Western Poland, East Brandenburg, the western half of East Pomerania (Army Group Shukoff)	57 000
From the west of East Prussia, Danzig-West Prussia and from the eastern half of East Pomerania (Army Group Rokossovski)	55 000
From East Prussia (Army Group Chernyakovski)	44 000
Total of civilians deported to Russia from the territory to the east of the Oder and Neisse	218 000

In Polish territory the Soviet deportation commandos encountered a special kind of difficulty. This was because, immediately after the occupation of the territory by Soviet troops, the Polish authorities had put a great number of the German population into Polish penal and labour camps, and also into prisons[172]). The Russian deportation plans came into conflict for the first time with the intentions of the Poles. The Soviet army commanders, however, generally succeeded in spite of the Poles. The Russian deportation commandos merely appeared in the internment camps, which had been erected by the Polish authorities for Germans, and selected able-bodied internees for deportation to Russia.

The procedure of deportation caused those affected dreadful sufferings. The long marches to the assembly camps, and the ill-treatment by Russian and Polish guards on the way resulted in the deaths of many of those being deported[173]). A special torment consisted in the incessant questionings, to which they were subjected at intermediate stations and assembly camps. From these questionings it was evident, that the Soviet authorities wanted to find a legal ground for the deportation. If it was impossible to prove that the deportees had belonged to National Socialist organizations, then the Russians tried to extort other kinds of incriminating admissions from them, in order to have a ground justifying the deportation[174]).

Especially in the prisons of Insterburg and Graudenz these questionings were accompanied by the cruelest and most brutal treatment[175]). Even in the assembly camps, hundreds of deportees perished, as the result of ill-treatment, malnutrition and illness. Others were so sick that even the Soviet commanders deemed it inexpedient to send them by rail to Russia. This happened specially in the case of many aged persons, who had been delivered by the commandos into the deportation camps. Many of these aged people, who were incapable of working, were discharged at the end of months, if they had not in the meantime already died of hardships and privation in the camps[176]).

As there were from the end of April no more deportations to Russia, the assembly camps which had been erected for this purpose were partly broken up, and partly handed over to the Poles. The camps of Graudenz, Posen and Sikawa became later particularly notorious, as Polish internment and forced labour camps[177]).

The second fatal stage of the deportation was the actual transport to Russia. At regular intervals transports trains were got together, at the chief loading stations. These trains contained on an average 2000 deportees. The journey to the labour camps in Russia lasted on an average from 3 to 6 weeks. During this time the deportees received far too little food and water, and as the first transports started in February, the effects of the bitter cold, on many of these people, who were altogether inadequately clothed, were too terrible for words. The mortality, therefore, on the journey to Russia was in general very high, and often reached 10% of the deportees[178]).

The labour camps, to which the deportees were brought, were scattered all over Russia. They were brought to the Arctic Ocean in the north, to the Caucasus in the south, and even to Turcomania. The great majority of the numerous camps were in the industrial districts of the Ural, the Donez and Don. In some of these camps there were only a few hundred deportees, and in some several thousand.

The deportees were so utterly weakened by the weeks of transport, that they generally had to be granted some weeks rest after their arrival, otherwise they would not have been capable of working. When they arrived in the labour camps in Russia, the tormentings by the guards generally ceased, after they had continually suffered these, on their way to the assembly camps in East Germany, until they departed on their deportation. There also seem to have been scarcely any more rapings of women.

Instead of that there began in the spring of 1945 the terrible amount of forced labour and the extremely low rationing, which had the most devastating effects. The mere kind of the work to be carried out put a breaking strain on the deportees. For it was generally the very hardest physical work which they were compelled to do: the felling and sawing up of trees in the forests of North Russia and the Caucasus[179]), further most toilsome exavation work in the earth and peat[180]).

Not only men but also women from East Germany had to do long shifts under ground in the coal and ore mines in the industrial districts of the Ural, Donez and Don[181]). And many deportees here were put on to the heaviest transport and loading work[182]). Some were employed in factories, quarries, brickworks[183]), and others on the building of roads and railway lines. The work varied according to the season of the year. In the summer and autumn a great number of deportees did work on collective farms[184]). In winter the forced labour often consisted in keeping railways and roads free from snow[185]). The overworking and intentional exploitation of the deportees was aggravated, by their being compelled to work for 12 hours and more a day. In this connection the Soviet principle of standard output was disastrous for these slave-workers. They were arranged in categories of work, with different standards according to their health and bodily strength[186]).

The deportees often attempted, by exceeding the quota, to earn additional rations, as what they normally received was totally insufficient. When the quota of work was regularly exceeded, this amounted not only to a continued exploitation of the capacity to work, but also often led to the quota being raised. The Russian workers had already had their experience of this system of increasing production, and were hardly any longer to be driven on in this way, but many Germans fell victims to this cunning system. As the conditions in the camps were altogether unhygienic, illness and mortality continually increased in the year 1945; this was in spite of the praiseworthy work of Russian doctors and lady-doctors who, however, were not supplied with medicaments, which fact rendered their work in vain. By far the greatest number of deaths among the German deportees occurred between the spring and autumn in 1945; during this period more than half the occupants died in many of the camps[187]).

Afterwards the situation became a little better for those who had survived this period. As a matter of fact overworking in the collieries, in agriculture and in the felling of timber, and in clearing-up work in the towns was not decreased, but the rationing was gradually improved, with the result that the health of the deportees improved. Later on there were again very bad conditions in some camps. This was caused by misappropriation of victuals, bribery and preferential treatment on the part of the guards[188]), some of whom were Poles in many camps. As the camps in Russia for civilians generally counted as penitentiary or correction ones, their occupants were on principle treated much worse than the German prisoners of war.

Between 1947 and 1948 the severe regulations were relaxed in many camps and the deportees were granted more freedom to move about. At the same time there were low wages paid in some camps for work done, so that the deportees were able to buy a certain amount of food and clothing[189]).

The Russian civil population showed no hostility to the Germans, in cases where contact was possible.

As early as summer and autumn in 1945 some camps were broken up and deportees sent back. This was done on account of the enormous mortality prevailing at the time. Those who were sick and unable to work were, in particular, discharged and sent back to Germany, but many of them died on the way[190]). And this, in spite of the fact that the rationing and treatment was much better on the return journey than when they had come.

After the first great wave of discharges in 1945, the breaking up of camps and return transports to Germany continued, during the years 1946, 1947 and 1948, at great intervals and with many interruptions. The last greater return transports took place in 1949, after the deportees had been at forced labour for four years[191]). Since then only individual east German deportees have come back. Although we know that many of them are still alive in the Soviet Union, we must all the same reckon with the fact, that the overwhelming majority of those, who have not returned, are already dead in Russia.

It is at the moment only possible to estimate approximately the number of losses owing to the east German deportations. According to investigations up to the present and the statements of reporters, on the mortality in the deportation camps, and during the transport we must assume that about a half of those actually deported, and in addition to that many thousands of those who were arrested and brought into assembly camps but not actually deported, *perished in the course of the action. It is sure that 100 000 to 125 000 died* as a result of the deportation.

IV. The Fate of the German population east of the Oder and Neisse under Russo-Polish Domination since 1945

The invasion of East Germany by the Red Army resulted in more than a half of the German population east of the Oder and Neisse being driven into Central and West Germany. The millions of Germans, who had to flee from the Red Army and leave their homes, had for a long time to suffer bitterly from the consequences of the expulsions, and they are to-day still without homes and property. They were, however, at least spared the harder fate of those Germans who in spring and summer came under the domination of the Russians and Poles. The over 5 million Germans, who were still in their country, when the Russians marched in or who came back at the end of the fighting, were also robbed of their ancestral homes. The only difference was that they suffered this fate later, but the way to it was inconceivably more bitter. Before leaving their homes, with just a little hand baggage, they lived for months and sometimes years in the power of the Russians and Poles, in a state of outlawry and under conditions which were inhuman. Indeed, if they finally survived the expulsion, this must have seemed to them to be release from indescribable sufferings.

The fate of the Germans during the years of Russo-Polish domination must, therefore, receive special attention, when considering the whole process of the expulsion of the east German population. Both the flight, which was at the beginning of the process of expulsion, and the official expulsion which constituted its end, would remain unclear and inexplicable, if we did not consider what the Germans east of the Oder and Neisse suffered under the power of the Russians and Poles, in the meantime beginning from 1945.

After the military defeat of Germany the situation of the German people living in the eastern territories of Germany in Danzig and in Poland varied very much.

The northern part of East Prussia was completely separated from the other East German *Provinzes*, and was placed by the decisions of the Allies in Potsdam under the administration of the Soviet Union. Otherwise than in this territory the German population in southern East Prussia, in Danzig, in East Pomerania, in East Brandenburg and Silesia made the acquaintance of a Russian occupation of several months or at least some weeks, but later it came under Polish administration. The fate of the Germans on the other hand in the old Polish territories was different. They were re-incorporated in the new established Polish state, immediately at the end of the fighting and without any period of Russian occupation.

For the purpose of our description it is, therefore, advisable first of all to consider what happened in the northern part of East Prussia, then the development in the remaining east German territories of the *Reich*, and finally the fate of the Germans in the Polish state.

1. The Fate of the Germans in that part of East Prussia which is under Soviet administration

As early as February 1945 the Allies arranged in Yalta, that a part of East Prussia should be allotted to the Soviet Union[102]). This arrangement was taken into account in the Potsdam Agreement, by deciding to put the northern part of East Prussia along with Königsberg under the administration of the Soviet Union. The Anglo-American Powers confirmed this settlement, by their unanimous decision to agree to the cession of this territory to Russia when peace was concluded. As frontier between the Soviet and the Polish administered part of East Prussia a line was laid down, which runs almost straight from the coast of the *Frisches Haff*, south from Heiligenbeil, eastwards direct through East Prussia and then ends at the old frontier between East Prussia and Lithuania to the north of Goldap.

After the entry of the Russians and the conclusion of the return movement of the refugees there were only about 250 000 to 300 000 Germans to the north of this frontier line[103]). About a quarter of these were in the town of Königsberg. The most eastern part of the *Provinz*, which included the districts of Tilsit, Ebenrode, Schlossberg, Gumbinnen and Insterburg was almost entirely devoid of inhabitants. There were also in the towns only a few thousand Germans[104]). Therefore, the Russians in February 1945 deported great numbers of natives and refugees, whom they had come across, in Samland, to these eastern districts. Here they had to do forced labour for the Soviet troops and were later employed on collective farms. Germans were afterwards deported into the thinly populated territories in the eastern part of East Prussia which was administered by the Russians. These people came from Konigsberg and in the spring of 1946 particularly from the district of Labiau. This compulsory transfer of the population, which tore many Germans away from their homes, led to the dispersion of the population, which had already been caused by the flight and return movement of refugees, being increased. These people had to live in a strange locality with compatriots who had also been deported from the most different parts of East Prussia and all of whom had become homeless. This fact characterizes the fate of those, who had been seized by the Russians, better in East Prussia than in any other East German territories[105]).

Further there was the state of absolute insecurity and continual danger, which lasted for years after the occupation had begun. Although Russian command headquarters were gradually established and rapings and plunderings forbidden, the orders of the commanders, and the police who were put on beat, did not suffice to protect the German population from the excesses of officers and men. Even in Königsberg the population were the victims of robbery by Russian soldiers for long after the town had been taken[196]). The situation was still more dangerous in the country, and particularly in lonely places and on farms, where there were few people. Here molesting by individual Russian soldiers, robberies of bands and the raping of German women continued until the end of the year 1945, and even in the course of the next year[197]).

Particularly sad was the fate of many thousands who after the occupation of the land were repeatedly arrested. These were often not only former members of the Party who had done nothing wrong, but also many who were wrongly suspected. Those of the arrested who were not deported to Russia were subjected to numberless questionings and torturings in prisons, penitentiaries and camps. The chief assembly places in the northern parts of East Prussia for the arrested were the penitentiary of Tapiau, the prison of Insterburg and the camp which was erected in the different barracks of Prussian Eylau. There were more than 10 000 Germans in the camp of Prussian Eylau, these people received very little food and had to do hard work Before the camp was broken up at the end of 1945 more than the half of them had died, as a result of being insufficiently fed, or of exhaustion and the notorious typhoid epidemic. Also the remaining population, of that part of East Prussia administered by the Soviets, passed through dreadful sufferings and losses during the months and years which followed the occupation of the land. The extensive depopulation and the economic isolation of the land, but in particular the brutal treatment by the Soviets of the few remaining Germans, led in East Prussia to the population dying off and sinking into a low and primitive state. In comparison with this, the state of affairs, prevailing at the same time in many parts of Silesia and Pomerania, could still be regarded as civilized. In a few years the traits of an old European civilization disappeared, and the people saw their home developing into something strange and uncanny before their very eyes.

Immediately after the occupation by the Soviet troops, the population in Königsberg and the smaller towns of the northern parts of East Prussia were put to every kind of forced labour[198]). For this purpose a part of the able-bodied men and women were temporarily interned; the rest were forced to work, by only being allotted rations when they did so under the supervision of the Soviet troops[199]). There was never anywhere in the northern part of East Prussia a generally organized supplying of food, that is to say a regular distribution of food coupons. The food situation in the towns and particularly in Königsberg soon became a catastrophe, for aged and sick people and for children.

During the first weeks after the capture of Königsberg the stocks in the deserted houses and stores were sufficient to be of help during the first emergency; this was of course providing they had not been already robbed by Russians. Plundering Russian soldiers and Germans in search of food went through the dwellings and cellars of the town. As the number of Germans, who had found work in Russian families, in headquarters or in the few factories which had been got running by the Russians continually decreased, the food situation became continually worse for the population. The only exception was the very small number of skilled workmen; most of these received, as specialists, sufficient food, and in some cases even wages[200]). In no other German town did hunger lead to so many deaths between 1945 and 1947 as in Königsberg Great numbers of the population lived from offal, and the demoralization finally reached such a pitch that the flesh of people who had been killed was offered for sale[201]).

Terrible hygienic conditions[202]) helped the spread of typhoid, dysentry, scabies and even malaria epidemics, and mortality increased in an unprecedented degree[203]). The result of this underfeeding and the epidemics was, that the high mortality in Königsberg continued for two years, that is to say from summer 1945 to summer 1947. During these two years, at least the half of the 70 000 Germans died who were registered in the summer of 1945 in Königsberg. There were according to unanimous statements only about 20 000 to 25 000 Germans in the town, in the summer of 1947[204]). It was possible to alleviate the suffering of many sick persons, because the hospitals in Königsberg were partly still under the management of German doctors and nurses. These did all they could within their power to give medical assistance[205]). It was, however, still impossible to bring the mortality to a stop.

The position was not much better in the smaller towns of the territory administered by the Russians. Also here the numbers of deaths among the population rose extraordinarily, in the summer of 1945[206]).

At the beginning somewhat more favourable conditions prevailed for the rural population. Although the Soviet troops were continually requisitioning grain and had seized almost all the cattle, the population found a certain amount of stocks, from the harvests of the year before, during the spring and summer of 1945; in this way they were able to eke out a very scanty existence. But some of these people were already in the summer of 1945 driven to desperate actions. There was nothing left for many of them to do, but to beg the Russian soldiers for food, when they returned in May and June, from their flight and found their homes and farms completely plundered. The good-naturedness and generosity of individual Russians towards small children and their mothers, which things were a rare contrast to the many excesses, were of very great help to some German families in their terrible distress[207]).

In the summer and autumn of 1945 the food situation in the country became better. This was because it was possible to harvest what had been sown everywhere before the Russian invasion of East Prussia. On all the large farms there were Soviet military commandos, under whose direction the German population had to get in the harvest. According to the Soviet system of standardized quotas, the women and men, and often also the children had to do the hardest forced labour. This, however, gave them an advantage over the towns-people, for when harvesting, threshing or milking, they were able to get food for themselves, in addition to the scanty rations.

We have many reports of how farmers' wives and female owners of estates had to creep by night onto their own fields and get corn for themselves and their children, for the Russian military authorities had seized the harvest. The whole crop on the East Prussian farms was for the Soviet troops, with the exception of the scanty portion allotted to the rural population for their work in the fields[208]). And the number of the Soviet troops was very high, particularly in the northern part of East Prussia, for long after the invasion. This explains the fact that, from spring 1945, the general famine increased also among the rural population[209]).

In 1946 the name of Königsberg was changed into that of Kaliningrad and the town thus sovietized also outwardly. At the same time the military administration, both here and in all the northern part of East Prussia, was changed for a civilian one under the state[210]).

With the exception of the Memel district, which was incorporated in the Soviet Republic of Lithuania, the northern part of East Prussia became for the future, as "Oblast Kaliningrad" (Department of Kaliningrad), an administrative unit incorporated in the Great Russian Republic[211]) (RSFSR). As early as the beginning of 1946, the first Russian civilians arrived from the interior of Russia in the towns and villages of East Prussia[212]). All the same the land continued to be controlled by the military. Pillau and Königsberg were converted into naval bases, and strong Soviet units were stationed also in the hinterland[213]).

Civil administrative work became on the other hand an entirely subordinate matter. Particularly agriculture, in the northern part of East Prussia, was utterly neglected. As a result of the depopulation, which was only relieved in a very small degree and very gradually by the arrival of Russian civilians, by far the greater part of the farming land was uncultivated and lay fallow from 1946 to 1949. This led to an increase of wild and desolate land[214]).

Solely some of the large estates were converted into collective farms, and the majority of the rural population and even some of the people from the small towns had to work on them[215]). Most of these collective farms were in the neighbourhood of Insterburg, Gumbinnen, Schlossberg and Ebenrode. Some Germans were deported to the collective farms, and worked there under compulsion, others, who had no other means of existence, sought work there on their own. They were working there in 1946 and 1947, and under the most primitive conditions. There was practically nowhere water and light again in running order. The most important machines and cattle had been stolen, so that women were sometimes harnessed to ploughs, and large fields had to be entirely mown with the hand scythe.

The estates were mostly uncultivated und weed-grown, and the custom was adopted, which had for long been prevalent in Russia, that is to say empty barns and farm buildings were torn down, and the wood used for heating in winter.

With the arrival of Russian civilians, who also had to work on the collective farms, many Germans were driven out of their quarters, and fresh plunderings and molesting ensued, against which there was no redress. In addition to this, illness and exhaustion through the hard work and underfeeding reduced the majority of the rural population of the northern part of East Prussia to a state of mere vegetation Some, therefore, tried to cross the severely guarded frontier separating the northern part of Soviet East Prussia from the southern part, which was under Polish administration, in order to try and get from there to the West[216]).

Lithuania and Latvia offered a great attraction to these people. In spite of prohibition, the risk of being arrested and the dangerous roads, many Germans, from the eastern district of East Prussia, and even from Königsberg, set out on their way to the Baltic States. For, in regard to agriculture and food, these were much better off than East Prussia, which had been stripped and made practically into a wilderness by the Russians. Men, women and also young people went particularly to Lithuania which was quite near, but also to Latvia which was further off, in order to beg for food, and then to return to their relatives in East Prussia. Some of them remained there, and earned their daily bread by working for Lithuanian and Latvian farmers[217]). The great willingness to help and the friendliness of the Lithuanians and Latvians alleviated the situation of many East Prussians, and afforded some of them the possibility of escaping from the unendurable conditions in East Prussia and the compulsory measures of the Russians, until they were able to go to Central or West Germany. The great majority of the German population in Königsberg and in the country, however, had to remain where they were, and to hope for better times in the future. It was particularly depressing for these people, that they had practically no contact with the outside world, and only received the very scantiest news from the rest of Germany.

The extent, to which the Germans in East Prussia had been isolated from the outside world since January 1945, is shown by the fact that many of them had only heard of the armistice and the end of the war by autumn 1945[218]). Furthermore, the Germans in Königsberg and other places in the north of East Prussia received no post from their relatives in Central and West Germany until 1946[219]).

Contrary to what happened in the other *Provinzes* of East Germany, where the population had been driven out in thousands to Central and West Germany since the summer of 1945, the Germans in the Soviet part of East Prussia remained in the land[220]). But here they were reduced to the very lowest level of human existence and were compelled to keep body and soul together, by the most primitive means conceivable. Thus, they became completely estranged from their home.

Some people managed to exist with the help of the "Black Market" in Königsberg and the towns near to the Lithuanian frontier, for this market had been flourishing since 1946. From autumn 1945 the rouble was made into the only legal currency[221]). Then everyone tried to get roubles by selling cloths they could dispense with and such belongings as had not yet been stolen, in order to purchase food with roubles at high prices on the "Black Market". In Königsberg, Tapiau, Gumbinnen, Wirballen, Tilsit and other places the "Black Market" was very much furthered by Lithuanian and Polish sellers; also Russian soldiers tried directly or indirectly to do shady business there[222]).

From 1947 the situation of the Germans began to get a little better, at least in Königsberg; the rural population, however, continued to live under primitive conditions which were intolerable. In summer the typhoid epidemic began to get better. In December the Russian currency was reformed and the purchasing power of the rouble became much better[223]). Food became cheaper and the situation of those Germans surviving gradually more normal, they also began to receive wages for their work.

At this time the old town of Königsberg, which had been founded many centuries ago by the Order of German Knights, had already begun to look like a Russian town, as a result of the continual influx of Russian civilians.

The approximately 25 000 German survivors were hardly noticeable in the streets, as they had been mostly driven into the destroyed and remote parts of the town. The Russian civilians, who were continually arriving, gradually took over the jobs of the Germans, which were the only means of existence, which these latter still had. It thus became evident that the Germans had become in every way superfluous, and their expulsion to West Germany began in the summer and autumn of 1947; this was at the very moment, when they were beginning to have fresh hopes, on accout of the improved food situation.

Just as in the case of Königsberg, the German population in the other towns and on the collective farms had been steadily decreasing, as a result of the high mortality between 1945 and 1947. The German population had become much less than the Russian, as Russian civilians were continually arriving in increasing numbers. The Germans had, therefore, become less important even as slave workers. The Russians, therefore, expelled them from 1947 to 1949 with the same determination, with which they had before prevented them leaving the part of East Prussia occupied by their forces[221]).

The fate of the Memel Germans was a special one. They were isolated from the part of East Prussia occupied by the Russians and were separated from the Germans there Several thousands of them remained in their home land, when the Russians marched in during the autumn of 1944, but many others tried, after having fled, to return home in the spring and summer of 1945.

The Memel district had been re-incorporated with the *Reich* in 1939 by a treaty with Lithuania. At the end of the war the Allies did not regard it as a part of Germany, but gave it back to Lithuania, which had become a Soviet republic and, therefore, a part of the Soviet Union. This was the same way in which the Allies had dealt with all territories incorporated with the *Reich* after 1937, and during the National Socialist government.

Most of the dwellings and farms of the German refugees had been occupied by Lithuanians in the spring and summer of 1945; this made it difficult for the Germans to return. In addition to this the frontier on the river Memel had been closed for returning Germans, until the autumn of 1945. Most of them, therefore, had to seek refuge in the district of Tilsit and other localities south of the river Memel.

All the same, numbers of Memel Germans succeeded in returning home, as early as the summer of 1945 and during the following years. Some of them had themselves repatriated as Lithuanian DPs from the refugee camps, in Central and West Germany, and Denmark, on the ground of having been Lithuanian citizens before 1939. Others came secretly back from East Prussia by crossing the river Memel[225]).

A Russian military administration governed the Memel district, at the beginning, just as East Prussia. Collective farms were established, and particularly the Germans in the country put to work on them. Other Germans had to work for Lithuanian farmers The Germans and Lithuanians lived generally after 1945 on friendly terms together, and this was in spite of the strained relations between them, arising from the re-incorporation of the Memel district in 1939 and the seizure by the Lithuanians in 1945 of the property of many Germans. The dislike of both for the Soviet form of government did much to overcome the national differences, which had arisen, since the end of World War 1.

During the spring and summer of 1945 the civil administration in the Memel district passed gradually into Lithuanian hands; the Russian command headquarters, however, very often remained long there. The land of any Germans, who still possessed farms, came in 1947 like that of the Lithuanian farmers under the Soviet policy of radically introducing the system of collective farms, and of annulling every form of private ownership. In this way the difference between Germans and Lithuanians disappeared, and the Memel Germans, who in the meanwhile had mostly taken Lithuanian citizenship, live today on an equal footing with their Lithuanian neighbours in the Memel district. It is hardly possible to ascertain, from the scanty news from Lithuania to the west, how far these Germans are able to retain their language and culture, seeing that the majority of the Memel Germans, have fled to Central and West Germany.

2. Happenings and Conditions east of the Oder and Neisse under the Soviet Military administration

Contrary to what happened in the northern part of East Prussia the Soviet military administration in the remaining territories of East Germany was limited to a short transition period. This period began with the process of occupation extending until May 1945 and ended at the latest in the autumn of 1945, when the administration was handed over to the Poles. The Soviet military administration in the different localities and places to the east of the Oder and Neisse was of different duration, according to the dates when the territory was seized and when the administration was handed to the Polish authorities.

In many places and districts of Lower Silesia and East Pomerania there was first of all, at the end of the fighting, a provisional period which was decided solely by the measures of the Soviet Occupation Power, without any collaboration on the part of the Poles. This period was in many respects different from the following time under Polish administration.

On the other hand in the cases of Upper Silesia, parts of southern East Prussia and in particular of Danzig an exact distinction between the Soviet occupation time and the time of Polish administration was scarcely possible. The reason was that in these territories, in addition to the Russian troops and from the very outset, there were Polish militia, Polish authorities and numbers of Polish civilians, who were exercising their influence both in collaboration with and opposition to one another.

In spite of such great differences in the different territories[226]), there was all the same a general period of Soviet occupation, because in all eastern German territory there were definite measures issued and carried out by the Soviet military administration, and in all territories there first of all followed a period after the occupation, in which it was the Soviet troops and commanders, who primarily determined the fate of the Germans. As regards what was ordered by the Soviet Occupation Power, after the conquest of East Germany, or what was done by individual Russians, it is sometimes difficult to say, whether these were measures held to be necessary in the interests of the Occupation Power or whether they were cases of harshness, cruelty and mere chicanery. As regards the latter it cannot be said whether they were intentional or results of a lack of humanity or inefficiency.

Thus the population, which was in a state of confusion through the flight and the incidents of the war, was also kept in suspense by measures of evacuation, and this, in particular, as long as the fighting was going on.

In East Brandenburg, which in the spring of 1945 was the area in which the Soviet armies organized their fight for Berlin, there was in February 1945 a twenty-five kilometre wide zone on the Oder evacuated, and the German population was sent to districts further to the east[227]). There was a similar zone of evacuation in March/April 1945 in East Pomerania. Here a fifteen kilometre wide strip, along the Baltic coast, had to be evacuated by the rural population in accordance with the measures of the Soviet army command. In the course of occupying the territory, there were temporary evacuations of this kind everywhere, where the front came for a lengthier period of time to a standstill and where it might be feared that the German civil population would collaborate with the German troops. For this reason many Germans were deported from Samland to the east[228]). Also in Silesia many thousands of people were driven by the Red Army in all directions for the same reasons[229]). It was not until the summer of 1945, that these shiftings of people gradually ceased and that the Germans could have some hope of again living in their homes or in places, where they had found refuge[230]).

The different Russian military headquarters, established in the towns and larger villages at the end of the fighting, ordered all German inhabitants to be registered. This was done in order to have a survey of the population.

These registrations, however, served another purpose. They were accompanied by inquisitorial questionings of individual Germans, of which the purpose in the opinion of the Russians was to find out political suspects and dangerous elements, among these previous members of the Party and its different organizations, of the *Volkssturm* and also of the whole group of persons designated as "capitalists"[231]). The range of those arrested was far beyond that which was later decided upon in Potsdam, and it would be impossible to justify their treatment. These people were brought into prisons and camps, and, if they were not immediately deported to Russia, they became the victims of continual questionings, innumerable torturings and of hunger feeding.

In the industrial district of Upper Silesia, where the number of men was far higher than in other localities, the questionings and arrests of those, who had had any connection at all with the Party, even if only in a purely formal way, were carried out with systematic thoroughness hardly a week after the occupation. In the rural districts this continued for the most part throughout the whole time of the Soviet military administration[232]).

The political purging and the "denazification", as carried out by the political commissioners, developed often into mere acts of revenge and persecution, which had nothing to do with legal proceedings. In many cases they were merely an excuse for actions of quite a different kind, such as in particular deportation and also perhaps the premeditated destruction of the bourgeosie[233]).

Particularly in the weeks immediately following the conquest and occupation, the treatment of the Germans by the Soviet military administration was obviously inspired by feelings of retaliation, and by the intention to degrade and humiliate those merely accused, in a degree totally incompatible with European notions of law and equity. As many Germans affected were thoroughly unacquainted with the crimes committed by the National Socialist leaders and administrators in Russia, and of which the Germans were being made collectively guilty, they could not understand the connection between this and the treatment to which they were subjected.

This applies also to the way in which the Russian occupation authorities called up the German population for forced labour. On principle the whole male and female German population from 15 to 65 years of age was subject to be called up for forced labour[234]). As work, with a purpose, was lacking in many places in which there were thousands of Germans, other work was invented. There is no doubt about the fact that, in addition to taking revenge for German measures during the war in Russia, also a certain revolutionary fanaticism against the prosperity of the German bourgeosie played an important part[235]).

One of the first and most tormenting works, to which the Germans were put was the seeking out and the burial of corpses of people and carcasses of animals. For as a result of the fighting and the many indiscriminate shootings, when the Russians marched in, these had been lying about for many weeks in villages and on the highroads. The Russian guards often selected for particularly unpleasant work persons whom they thought to be "capitalists".

Although this forced labour was accompanied by much chicanery, and, in general, was of a particularly toilsome kind, for the hours were long and the women had to do the hardest work which could be required of men, this work remained later on for the German population, their only means of existence, even after the compulsion was being relaxed. For only those, who worked received rations[236]), and furthermore the work under the supervision of Soviet guards afforded a certain protection against excesses and robbery. For in spite of the express prohibition of the Soviet commanders[237]), rapings, plundering and even shooting by Russian soldiers and attacks by bands of robbers were by no means rare. The excesses occurred most often in the country, where the Soviet command headquarters were often kilometres away[238]). But also in towns such as Breslau, Danzig, Stettin and in the densely populated places of the Upper Silesian industrial district the Soviet commanders were unable to prevent plundering and raping[239]). Declared anti-Fascists and even German Jews had to suffer these things just as former members of the Party[240]).

Those Germans, who were in the personal service of Russian officers, were relatively in a favourable position. These were for instance, women who did cooking, washing and tailoring for military headquarters. They were generally well treated, received their food regularly and made the acquaintance of the better side of the Russians. Also the German workmen in the Upper

Silesian district received special treatment. In these cases economic considerations very soon influenced the measures of the Russian military administration. A great number of the miners and skilled workmen, all of whom had first of all been interned in assembly camps[241]), were released on the demand of individual Russian military headquarters. After doing emergency work they were allowed to return to their previous work and received preferential rationing.

The lot of the German population was generally speaking much worse in the other East German towns. With the exeption of minor clearing-up work. the Soviet military administration did practically nothing in the way of rebuilding the towns or of getting works running again. On the contrary, the German population in the towns was put on the work of systematically dismantling everything of value. That was not all, but all wireless-sets and cameras, all cycles, typing machines and pianos had to be handed over to the Russians, this also applied to machinery and appliances of factories, to public utilities, dwellings, public transport vehicles and accessories, to electric plants, to the furniture in schools, in town-halls, in hotels and hospitals; this was all dismantled and brought to Russia.

The Soviet Union agreed to and supported the claim of the Communist Government of Poland to East Germany. Nevertheless, before closing their different local headquarters in East Germany and before handing over the administration to the Poles, the Russians took everything of value, which they could lay their hands on, from the east *Provinzes* of Germany. From the spring to the autumn of 1945, they caused their occupation units to dismantle valuable industrial plant and to transport such goods in their entirety and as quickly as possible to Russia[242]). They also condoned the personal appropriation of German property by the officers and soldiers of the occupation force.

It was only the Upper Silesian industrial district, which was, to a certain degree, spared the radical dismantling by the Russians in East Germany. Here only certain single plants and machines were dismantled. Generally speaking it would appear, that the provisional Polish Government, which had taken over the civil administration of Upper Silesia, as early as the spring of 1945[243]), had succeeded by influence or negotiations in prevailing on the Soviet occupation forces to restrict the dismantling, in such a degree, that the productivity of the industrial district of Upper Silesia would not be jeopardized.

The consequence of the extensive dismantling and destruction work was, that even the urgently necessary public utilities were closed down[244]).

This Soviet method of collecting reparations was not restricted to the towns and industrial plant; also agriculture was very hard hit. The majority of agricultural machines and particularly a huge quantity of cattle were seized and brought away. As soon as the Soviet troops marched in, thousands of horses were requisitioned for military purposes; later on there continually came fresh Soviet commandos to the German farms, in order to seize also the cows, pigs, goats, sheep and even the poultry. All east Germans, who went through the period of the Soviet military administration, know from personal experience what huge herds of cattle, were carried off to Russia in the spring and summer of 1945[245]). Many of these people had to drive away the cattle themselves, by order of the Russians and to witness how valuable domestic and breeding cattle perished on the way to the east[246]).

Owing to these measures, the agricultural productivity of the eastern territories of Germany was enormously decreased, also for the Poles when they arrived[247]). Where once there had been flourishing agriculture, one was forced in cases, where it was still possible to cultivate the land at all, to resort to the most primitive methods and to hundreds of different kinds of makeshifts.

The greatest estates alone formed a certain exception to the general decline of agriculture. Contrary to what was done in the case of the small farms, about which the Soviet military administration did not bother at all, so that they after the removal of the cattle and machines were left to their owners in a plundered and ruined state, or became desolate and ceased to exist, a great number of the larger estates and domains were seized by the Soviet military administration, and kept running under the supervision of military commandos.

Whereas most of the arable land remained fallow[248]) for lack of workers, machinery and cattle, the German rural population was assembled on the estates seized by the Red Army, and also cattle and machinery were collected together in order to get these estates running again.

A considerable portion of the German rural population worked in the autumn of 1945 on these estates, which had been converted into Russian military collective farms, until the end of the harvest and threshing Germans were even fetched from the towns and many of them went willingly, in order to get food for their work[249]).

Some of the Soviet military collective farms still remained in the hands of the Russians, even after the Polish administration had been established everywhere[250]). Some of these estates, particularly in Lower Silesia, were passably managed, in some cases they were even managed by Germans[251]). Very many of these estates had, however, only been got running, in order to harvest the grain which was on the fields in the summer of 1945, and thus to have supplies for the Soviet troops[252]). When this had been done, the Soviet military administration was no longer interested in them, but drove the cattle away and transported the machines to Russia. There were even cases of the Russian harvesting commandos maliciously destroying the appliances on the farms, before their departure, in order to leave the Poles nothing[253]).

For a great number of Germans it was at least an advantage, that, by working on the collective farms, they had a means of existence, even although this was a very poor one. The food distributed was often not enough to satisfy the hunger of these people who had to work very hard; but many of them were at least able during the harvest time to get secretly the barest necessities in the way of food.

The food situation in the towns was much worse than in the country. It is true that the military administration introduced German mayors and German administrations in the towns and villages[254]). It was, however, the fate of these men solely to have to carry out the orders of the Soviet commanders. They had by no means the power to get life and economy in the towns running again. As there were no foodstuffs in the land and the works were not running, the shops and businesses were closed[255]). German money was practically worthless, and, even in such large towns as Breslau, the workers were paid their wages almost exclusively in natural produce[256]). During the time of the Russian military administration there were practically no power or waterworks, also no public means of transport working anywhere in the territory of East Germany. The reason for this was partly, that many utility plants had been destroyed by the war, that the most important factories had been dismantled and the stores plundered.

It was also very fatal, that, as early as the summer of 1945, a great number of Polish civilians had poured into East Prussia, East Pomerania and Silesia. These Poles immediately began to seize the businesses, handicraft shops and farms for themselves. The revival of the economy, which could have been started by the population of the German towns, was, paradoxically speaking, stifled before it had begun. It was only in some towns of Lower Silesia, where the Poles had not yet settled down, that after the first weeks of the occupation life recommenced with the tendency to a slow development. This applies for instance to Schweidnitz, where even a number of shops had again opened in the summer of 1945 and in which one could pay with German money[257]). Also, in several smaller places in this locality, German administrative bodies were able to make considerable progress in providing for the population in the summer of 1945.

Generally speaking, these were, however, exceptions. For also in Lower Silesia most of the towns were in a state of increasing demoralization, and they were beginning no longer to look like German towns. Everywhere it was the same picture, whether one considered Liegnitz, Glogau and Grünberg or the East Prussian towns of Osterode, Allenstein, Sensburg or the Pomeranian towns of Köslin, Stolp and Treptow.

The terrible situation in the towns of East Germany during the summer and autumn of 1945 is best illustrated by the extremely high mortality amongst the Germans as the result of hunger, unhygienic conditions and their enormous physical exhaustion. There were epidemics of typhoid in all the towns of East Germany[258]), in Breslau, the smaller towns of Silesia and likewise in East Prussia, East Pomerania and East Brandenburg. The number of people who died from this appears to have been highest in the Pomeranian towns. For during, the summer and autumn of 1945 about a third of the population of Treptow and Stolp died[259]).

Before the towns and villages of East Germany came officially under Polish administration and before the Russian occupation authorities had handed over their authority to the Poles, there came in some parts a long period of transition, and of ruling together and against one another, on the part of the Poles and the Russians. This led to extremely unpleasant conditions for the Germans still there. Immediately after the conquest of East Germany the Russians used the Polish prisoners of war and civilian workers there, as a militia for keeping order and gave them the right of supervising and commanding the German population. Former Polish prisoners of war or civilian workers were in some places even appointed to be mayors. In addition to the Polish civil workers and prisoners of war who had been working everywhere in Germany and also in its eastern territories, many of whom had been compulsorily brought from Poland to Germany, there came, besides the members of the Polish army following the Soviet armies, many thousands of Polish civilians over the old German-Polish frontier[260]). Particularly in the southern territory of East Prussia, in Danzig, in Upper Silesia and in many parts of Pomerania, one saw more Poles than Russian troops in the towns and cities, as early as the spring and summer of 1945. In many places Polish administrations had been established even in the spring of 1945[261]).

Whereas the regular Polish army behaved themselves in general more correctly than the Russian troops, the Polish bourgeois militia, consisting mostly of armed Polish civilians, soon became more feared than the Red Army by the German population[262]).

As a result of the co-existence of Polish authorities and Russian command headquarters, there arose in the summer and autumn of 1945 continual overlappings between Polish and Russian orders. This increased the outlawry and insecurity of the German population[263]). There were in some cases certain advantages attached to this, that is to say when the Russian commanders, as sometimes happened, protected the Germans against the excesses of the Poles. Generally, however, they were either unwilling or not able to do this[264]).

The question of competent authority between the Poles and the Soviet military administration was as a rule a problem for the German population, and generally there was nothing done to clarify it[265]). In many localities there were Polish and Russian spheres of influence, which were parallel but totally separated from one another. For instance during the year 1945 there were villages in which alone the Russians had to decide, whereas in neighbouring villages Polish authorities ruled[266]). In the towns there were sometimes separate German sectors, in which the Russian command headquarters were the competent authority, whereas in other sectors of the town the Polish authorities were in charge[267]).

The relations between the Poles and the Russians were naturally very strained, because they competed with one another in being the masters in East Germany. In many places this resulted in continual disputes and even in the use of firearms[268]). Apart from the old national hostility between the two, there was also the fact, that the Russian troops in East Germany systematically dismantled everything which was of value, and left the Poles a land of which the agriculture and industry had been plundered. After the Allies came, at the Potsdam Conference (17. July to 2. August 1945), to the provisional arrangement, pending a final decision in a treaty of peace, that East Germany, also with the concurrence of the West Powers, should be under Polish administration, the Poles felt themselves encouraged in their aims and now set about, polonizing East Germany more thoroughly than ever. Although a portion of the Russian troops remained in the land, and there were for years Russian military collective farms in East Germany, the time of the Soviet military administration there, was in general at an end in the autumn of 1945.

3. The situation of the German population under Polish administration until the expulsion

At the Potsdam Conference the governments of the Soviet Union, of the U.S.A and of Great Britain agreed that the German territories to the east of the Oder and the Lusatian Neisse should be put under Polish administration, until the German frontiers were finally settled in a future treaty of peace[269]).

After having examined, as far as is to-day possible, what diplomatically led to the fixing of the Oder Neisse line, there can be no doubt that the West Powers were, towards the end of the war, on principle in agreement with the Soviet Union, "that Poland should receive a considerable increase of territory in the north and in the west"[270]).

It must, however, be assumed that, after some vaccilation, they did not want the Polish frontiers to be extended to the Oder and Lusatian Neisse. Also after the Potsdam Conference the representatives of Great Britain and the U S.A repeatedly emphasized, that the question of the western frontiers of Poland was still open and must be settled in a future treaty of peace; this is also quite clear from the wording of the Potsdam Decisions[271]).

It is true that the West Powers agreed in Potsdam to the German territories, to the east of the Oder and Neisse, being provisionally put under the administration of the Poles, but this they did, not only for tactical reasons but also under the compulsion of 'faits accomplis', with which the representatives of the Anglo-American Allies were confronted at Potsdam.

Contrary to the decisions of the "Big Three" at Yalta, extensive territories of East Germany had been handed over to the Poles by one-sided Russo-Polish measures, without contacting the West Powers; indeed both the settlement of the Poles in East Germany and the removal of the German population had already begun

As the representatives of the West Powers were not in a position to compel the Russians to countermand this procedure, and as they attached particular importance to avoiding the friction, which had already commenced between the Soviet Union and the West Powers, leading to a break-down of the whole conference, they saw nothing else to do but to agree to the Polish administration in East Germany as a provisional arrangement.

Although the wording of the Potsdam Decisions emphasized, that the agreement of the West Powers to the provisional arrangement under no circumstances amounted to anything final, with regard to the fixing of the future German frontier[272]), nevertheless, it was fatal that the representatives of Great Britain and the U.S.A. did not take the fact into consideration, that a permanent state of affairs could arise from a provisional arrangement, in the event of differences of opinion in the future preventing the conclusion of a treaty of peace.

It is impossible to acquit the West Powers of the reproach that they either did not observe this danger or tacitly passed it over, in order to maintain a state of harmony with the Soviet Union. The actual originators of the decision to hand over to the Poles the administration of the territory, to the east of the Oder and Neisse, were the Soviet Union and the Polish government which were their puppets. They had with premeditation and success carried out a policy of 'faits accomplis'.

Boleslav Bierut announced in the press on the 5. February 1945, in his capacity as premier of the provisional government of the Polish Republic, that Poland had taken over the civil administration in the territories of the *Reich,* to the east of the Oder and Neisse[273]) As a matter of fact the command over the *Provinzes* of East Germany, as far as they had by then been conquered by the Red Army, was at this time in the hands of the Soviet military command. The declaration therefore, of Bierut makes it clear, that the Polish government, which was the only one recognized by the Soviet Union, had received in principle from the Soviet government the administration over the territories of East Germany as early as February 1945.

As a matter of fact the Polish government departments, formed in the meanwhile, were administering extensive territories of East Germany, long before the Potsdam Agreement.

It is a striking fact that this was being done in the Free City of Danzig. On the 30. March 1945 the Polish provisional government issued the decree, "Concerning the forming of the government district of Danzig"; this decree incorporated this Free State in the Polish State and put it under Polish Jurisdiction[274]). As early as April the Soviet occupation troops in Danzig were in a large measure relieved by Polish militia; this was similar to what had been done in the old Polish territory, immediately after the entry of the Red Army.

In the same month the first Poles from the east Polish territories, which had been ceded to Russia, were settled in Danzig. The laws, which had been passed for the old Polish territories, were now applied to the Free City of Danzig[275]), and this was done without an Allied decision having been arrived at, in regard to the future fate of Danzig.

The Polish authorities took over the administration, as early as the spring of 1945, in a great portion of German territory. This happened in Elbing on 1. April, in Osterode, Sensburg and in other district towns in the south of East Prussia in May[276]).

When the Soviet army marched into the industrial district of Upper Silesia, they immediately organized a Polish militia, and from the very beginning assigned it the control of the Germans. In February, March and April masses of Poles poured into this district over the old Polish-German frontier. At the end of April the Poles officially took over the administration and the industrial plants in the towns of Gleiwitz, Beuthen and Hindenburg. Even in Lower Silesia there was at the end of April a Polish government district authority and this, although it was not until the summer and autumn that there was an organized Polish administration there. For this administration had been resident in Liegnitz, before the fall of Breslau and did not move to Breslau till later[277]) The position was similar in East Pomerania, for there also Polish authorities were governing in many towns and villages, as early as May 1945[278]).

A few weeks after the Polish provisional government had extended its authority to the district of the Free City of Danzig, it also extended its rule officially to the German territories east of the Oder and Neisse According to

Poland's historic claim to the territories of East Germany, which had been proclaimed with a loud blare of propaganda after 1945, these territories were henceforth designated in official Polish language as "Regained territories". On the 24. May 1945 a decree was issued, "Concerning the administration of the regained territories". This decree stipulated, that the previous territories of East Germany were under the authority of Poland. A few days later on the 29. May 1945 a provisional organization, for the administration of the regained territories, was ordered and in connection therewith there was also a provisional decision, which stipulated that external departments of the old Polish government districts should be established in the territory of East Prussia[279]).

The procedure of the Polish provisional government, the passing of Polish laws, and the establishment of Polish administrative authorities in East Germany, which had been occupied by the Red Army, were decisions which would have been impossible, if they had not been tolerated and supported by the Soviet government.

This led on the 8. April 1945 to a protest by the American government in Moscow. As the answer of the Soviet government was unsatisfactory, the protest was repeated on the 8. May in a sharper form[280]). It was declared in this American note of the 8. May 1945, that the Warsaw government had established a complete state apparatus in the territory of East Germany and put their laws into force, that further a resettlement of Poles in these territories had begun, and that it was obvious that a still further extension of the Polish administration in East Germany was planned. It was further maintained, that these actions were unilateral and without previous consultation with the Allies, and, therefore, infringed the principles which had been agreed to in Yalta, about the control and occupation of Germany. Such protests had little effect upon the Soviet government, and in Potsdam it became evident that the Soviet policy of 'faits accomplis' had proved successful[281]).

After the West Powers had agreed to Poland taking over the administration, in the German districts east of the Oder and Neisse, the polonization of East Germany began to be carried out radically, in all spheres and by the aid of all means available. Polish administrative authorities moved in everywhere into the southern part of East Prussia, into East Pomerania, into East Brandenburg and into Silesia. They relieved the German mayors who had been put into office by the command headquarters of the Russians[282]).

The Polish militia was the "arm of public security" in the German villages and towns. This militia was generally recruited from Poles who had come into the land at the end of the war or in the wake of the Soviet armies. It had partly received functions of control from the Soviet command headquarters. The local militia units often consisted of very doubtful characters, as it was mostly set up according to the whim of individual Soviet commanders, or of local Polish authorities. The fact that this militia was very suddenly set up often led to young people joining it who did not want to work, or such persons as hoped to do a good business in this way. With few exceptions this militia, which had been conjured up by the Polish authorities, was very fatal for the German population. For it misused its authority, to establish order, for general plundering[283]), gave vent to feelings of national hatred, and tortured and maltreated great numbers of entirely innocent Germans.

The Zloty was introduced in the summer and autumn of 1945 as the currency in the East German *Provinzes* which were under Polish administration[284]). The German names of places and streets were done away with and Polish names substituted for them. The Polish language became obligatory as the official language. Und in Upper Silesia it was forbidden to hold church services in German, because the Poles were eager to demonstrate the original Polish character of this land[285]).

The taking over of the administration by the Poles was characterized by a new wave of arrests, in the towns and villages. The arrest and deportation of thousands of former National Socialists and of other suspects by the Russians was not sufficient for the Polish authorities. The National Socialist occupation of Poland and the crimes committed there had led to a hatred, which demanded retribution, and the Poles did not enquire into whether a man was guilty or innocent. There began a fresh period of the cruelest persecution of many people, who, although mostly innocent, had to pay for what had been done in the name of Germany to Poles or Polish Jews during the war. The prisons in the towns were filled with Germans. They were mostly charged with having belonged to the organizations of the Party and the police, further with bad treatment of Polish civil workers and prisoners of war. The establishment of Extraordinary Criminal Courts, for the purpose of seeking suspects[286]), brought about a state of affairs which was calculated to lead to a wave of arrests, based merely on suspicion and which also paved the way for every form of arbitrariness. These Extraordinary Courts were not abolished until the 17. October 1946[287]).

Up to this point there was very often the very greatest injustice done to Germans, in the course of questioning and arrest. As very often happens, when a form of government is changed, a huge number of sycophants were found both among Poles and Germans. There was further the blind hatred on the part of those belonging to the Polish Militia and the State Security Service, and these had the duty of arresting, of guarding and questioning in the prisons. They sometimes made a disgusting business out of the arresting. Just as previously in the case of the *SS* in concentration camps, for whose misconduct the Poles wanted to avenge themselves, the Polish Security Service had 'carte blanche', and the same kind of tortures and ill-treatment, as the *SS* had inflicted, were carried out in the prisons of East Prussia and Pomerania. Contrary to what the Russians did, the Poles, out of absolute national hatred of the Germans, inflicted on them the most shocking tortures evincing sadism and all forms of humiliation.

The greatest number of arrests and of measures of retaliation took place in Upper Silesia. On the ground of the Polish redistribution of administration districts in East Germany, Upper Silesia was put under the government district of Kattowitz. The treatment of the Germans here assumed forms, which bordered on the brutal measures which were adopted against the ethnic Germans in the Polish *Provinzes*, and who were generally regarded as traitors and collaborators[288]). Thousands of Germans, who were accused because of their having belonged to the Party or for other reasons, were deported from

Upper Silesia into camps in the Polish part of the government district of Kattowitz. Here they had to do the very hardest form of forced labour for years and were the victims of continual cruelty, hunger and of diseases caused by insufficient food. The measures of retaliation in Upper Silesia were not restricted to the arrest of individuals, although even these were often utterly unjustified. On the contrary, in many parts of the land the German population of whole villages were put 'en masse' into camps, and there was no difference made between men, women and children. It would appear, that such measures were the arbitrary actions of individual commanders of the Polish militia. This is confirmed by the terrible happenings in the camps and the fact, that the Poles pretended to Russian control officials that all the arrested were former National Socialists. Camps of this kind, in which at times there were 3000 to 5000 Germans, existed, among other places, in Lamsdorf, the district of Falkenberg[289]) and in the town of Grottkau[290]).

By the time the internees were expelled and the camps closed in the summer of 1946, a very great number of the prisoners had died, as a result of ill-treatment, epidemics and diseases caused by the bad and insufficient food and by the unhygienic conditions. We must reckon that the mortality in the camps reached as much as 50% of the inmates, mostly children and aged people. This state of things prevailed particularly from the summer of 1945 until the winter of 1946[291]).

The brutal ill-treatment and reducing to wrecks of numbers of Germans in camps and prisons, was done under the pretence of punishing them. It must be classified as a great injustice[292]), even if here and there it should be true, that some of the prisoners were really responsible for crimes committed against Poles and Polish Jews. In fact most of those so treated were innocent beyond the shadow of a doubt. Just as in the case of the National Socialist tyrants, so also in the case of the Polish authorities and the Polish militia, the notion of collective guilt was the intellectual peak of their narrow minded chauvinism.

The National Socialist rule had caused hatred of Germans, and this was aggravated by the passionate temper of the Poles. They, therefore, yielded more than the West Allies, indeed even more than the Russians, to the temptation of paying back evil with evil. This was proved by the many public lynchings, which took place particularly in Poland, but occasionally also in East Germany. There were public demonstrations leading to a tragic confusion between old and new wrong, everywhere where mass-graves of Polish workers, of Polish prisoners of war or of Polish Jews were found, and which dated back to the National Socialist rule. In such cases, it was a popular measure to drive the Germans from the surrounding locality together, and to assemble them at the graves Here they were forced by being brutally beaten to open up the graves and to remove the corpses. The whole procedure was urged on by the encouraging cries of the spectators, in morbid curiosity.

Such occurrences demonstrated to a maximum the absurdity of collective retaliation, and also the tragedy of this sequence of reciprocal persecutions and injustices. Particularly in connection with this action of arrests and retaliation, the theory of collective guilt was seen to have no sense, for there had often been between Poles and Germans personal friendships as the result of long acquaintanceship during the war, and also because Germans had intervened for Poles who were being treated with ruthlessness by the National Socialist tyrants. And now in such cases individual Poles often helped Germans who were in danger and saved them from their fate.

Although, of course, only a part of the German population suffered retaliation and arrest, the unconditional forced labour introduced by the Poles affected almost all Germans[293]). They were put onto the work of cleaning up streets and dwellings, of breaking up burnt or damaged houses and residential quarters and of loading the stuff for transport to Poland, as material for rebuilding Polish cities, particularly Warsaw[294]). The Germans were also called up for getting industrial works running again, and, above all, for working as farm labourers. It often happened that a portion of the German inhabitants from the towns were collected together in columns and ordered off to work on farms. The feeding in such cases was generally worse than with the Russians[295]). Refusal to work, however, was useless. Commandos of Polish militia went through the villages and assembled columns of Germans for working[296]). In the towns the German inhabitants, as soon as required for definite work, were seized in the streets and brought under armed escort to the place where they had to work. They were even not safe from this when going to church on Sunday. This compulsory work was enforced with particular severity in Upper Silesia. Here it led to the establishment of regular labour camps; most of these, however, existed for only a few weeks or months.

The famine, which there had been under the Russian occupation, also continued under the Polish administration, for the forced labour brought the Germans only an utterly insufficient rationing, and without receiving wages they could not afford to pay the high prices in Zlotys. Compared with the Russian occupation time the conditions did to some extent change, because in some parts a quite adequate amount of foodstuffs was offered for sale, as early as the summer and autumn of 1945. This was due to the great influx of Polish dealers who introduced the Zloty currency, and also due to the amount of American help being given to Poland[297]). These things, however, were beyond the means of the German population, as they generally received for their work merely scanty rations and no money. The only way for the Germans to obtain Polish money, and so purchase food imported by the Poles, was to sell at low prices the last goods and valuables which they had managed to save from the general plundering[298]).

Also at the time of the Polish administration the Germans were the continual victims of famine, exhaustion and epidemics, and many of them died as the result[299]). In Breslau hunger drove the Germans to beg from the Russians and Poles and to search the wastebins for bits of food The impoverishment of the Germans got worse and worse, the more the Poles came into the country and seized German property and landed property. Although under the occupation of the Red Army enormous losses had resulted from plundering, dismantling and the removal of cattle and goods, and the industrial and agricultural productivity had sunk very low in the territory east of the Oder and the Neisse, nevertheless, property and fortunes had not been annulled on principle. It is true that many estates and domains had been seized by the Russians, nevertheless, numerous German farmers were still living on their farms and the Germans in the towns still retained their handicraft shops, their businesses and their houses. This all changed when the Poles took over the administration, and thousands of Poles flooded into East Germany; for these latter, when they came from East Poland, had also lost their property.

As early as the 2. March 1945 the Polish Provisional Government issued a decree concerning "property which had been given up and abandoned"[300]). This decree stipulated, that all the property of persons, who had fled from the Red Army and not returned fell to the Polish State, and that further all property of the German *Reich* and of German citizens was on principle to be regarded as "property which had been given up", and which, therefore, was also transferred to the Polish State. This decree was proclaimed in the towns and villages of East Germany, generally as soon as the Poles had taken over the administration[301]).

As the result of the transfer of all German property to the Polish State, the Germans on their farms in the country and in their dwellings in the towns were only tolerated temporarily. Some of them had to pay rent for their own houses and had to be prepared at any time to lose in fact their property, which had been already formally expropriated and to have to leave their dwellings. The whole legislation for the expropriation of German property was intended to serve as a legal foundation for giving property to Polish settlers and for substituting Polish civilians for Germans.

The taking over of German property by Polish civilians and the settlement of the latter in the eastern territories of Germany were carried out in an irregular way, until about the end of the year 1945. This put the Germans affected in a situation, in which they were no longer able to distinguish between arbitrary enrichment and plundering on the part of individual Poles and official measures of the Polish authorities. At first the Poles began to take possession of East Germany by many Polish civilian workers and prisoners of war, who, when the Red Army marched in, were in the villages and on the estates of East Germany, appropriating empty farms and also houses in the towns, where they were tolerated with good will by the Russians as the new owners[302]).

It was, however, of much greater importance that the influx of numerous Polish civilians began immediately after the Red Army had marched in. Even before the settlement of the re-settlers from the East Polish provinces had begun, many thousands of Poles had come from the districts of West Poland near to the frontier, some also from the towns of Central Poland. Their purpose was to recompense themselves from German property for what had been taken from them, during the time of the National Socialist rule, or some of them came merely to enrich themselves as far as they could. This stream of Poles, which came in the spring of 1945 to East Germany, first of all poured into the territories of East Prussia near to the frontier, into Danzig, into the eastern districts of Pomerania and into those parts of Silesia to the east of the Oder. In the course of the summer it proceeded continually further to the west. One part of the Poles, who had come into the land, wanted to settle on the abandoned farms of the Germans and in their houses, as the Provisional Government had called upon the population of Poland to settle in the territories of East Germany. Another part of the Polish new-comers consisted of speculators, racketeers and people seeking spoil, who thought they had a good chance of becoming rich, but had no intention of remaining in the country. Many of them put themselves at the disposal of the militia, others told the Polish authorities they wanted to settle in Germany and in this way soon acquired property which they quickly removed or sold. They then returned to Poland, in order to come back again and do the same thing somewhere else[303]).

This irregular influx of people from the districts of West and Central Poland was quite different from the Polish settlers who first began to arrive in the early summer of 1945. These people came from the East Polish territories which had been ceded to Russia, and their settlement was more or less under control. Most of them were farmers and farm labourers, and they were mostly settled in the country. In this regard there seems to have been the intention to first of all settle them in the most western parts of East Germany, in order in this way to create a 'fait accompli' on the Oder and Neisse.

Although in the case of these people from East Poland, who had themselves been expelled from there, there was the serious intention for them to take over property and settle on the land, this was done neither according to legal forms nor in a regular and humane way. This was quite natural and became very obvious, when the empty farms and houses did not afford a sufficient variety of choice. Then the Polish settlers began, with the sanction of the local administration and militia, to drive the Germans, who had remained, from their dwellings and houses. In the case of single Polish new-comers the taking over of houses and farms, during this first period when the settling was by no means organized, occurred by the Poles in question choosing a farm or house in the German villages and cities, and then getting it allotted to them by the competent Polish authorities, and finally in driving the Germans from the property desired with the help of the Polish militia[304]). But also in cases where the Polish settlers arrived in groups and were put by the Polish militia into the houses of the Germans, this was also done by way of a brutal expulsion by force. In such cases the German inhabitants often only received a time limit of minutes in which to get out and had to leave their homes with only very little baggage[305]).

In many towns and villages the Polish authorities proceeded with even greater vigour. With the assistance of the militia they had whole localities temporarily evacuated by the German population, and then the German property was thoroughly plundered, valuables which were moveable carried away by lorry, and Poles put into the best houses[306]).

Also in those German towns, where such draconic measures were not resorted to, the continually increasing number of Poles pouring in, led to the German population being evacuated from whole rows of streets and sectors of towns. Finally there remained only the worst sectors as kinds of ghettoes for the Germans[307]). Thus the Germans in the east *Provinzes* had, in fact, been deprived of their homes before they were expelled.

For the most part the Poles settled in the country. This was chiefly because the majority of settlers in the summer and autumn of 1945 came from the East

Polish territory ceded to Russia, and which was purely agricultural. They arrived with only a little hand baggage and were allotted to German villages. About 1.4 million Poles from the territory to the east of the Bug were re-settled by July 1946 in East German *Provinzes;* this was after the transfer of the East Polish population to the west had been nearly completed[308]). As they generally did not want to take over large farms, their transfer to East Germany led to the small German farmers being driven out; it is true that these latter had lost their machinery, implements and cattle under the Russian occupation, but they had remained in possession of their farms. These also were now taken from them and occupied by the Polish new-comers. The best that happened was, that the German owners were allowed to remain and work for the time being for the Polish settlers[309]); in many cases this was also refused them. Those Polish settlers, who came from parts where there had been little friction between Poles and Germans and who had not been infected by the prevailing feelings of revenge, in some cases were very friendly to the expropriated Germans, and in many cases even tried to alleviate their lot. Many, however, only thought of their own material gain and exploited the outlawed Germans merely as slave workers.

The general expropriation of German property and the settlement of Poles brought about a total impoverishment and social decline of the German population, in the territories east of the Oder and Neisse. The German farmers had become the labourers of the new Polish owners, and master craftsmen the mere mates of the Polish craftsmen[310]). All auxiliary service and hard work in town and country had to be done by the Germans, whereas on the other hand not only the possession of property but also legal protection by the government were reserved solely to the Poles who came into the country.

As a rule only small workshops and farms became the private property of Polish settlers. The large industrial works, and also most of the large estates and former German domains were declared to be the property of the Polish State.

The nationalization of private property, which had begun since 1945 in all states of the East Block as a result of the increasing sovietization, was in 1945 first of all only applied to previous German property. As early as 3. January 1946, however, a decree was issued, "Concerning the conversion of the chief branches of economy into state property". By this decree the process of nationalization was extended also to Polish private property; consequently larger German property could no longer pass into the private possession of Poles[311]).

The large estates, after they were abandoned by the Russians, were taken over by administrative departments of the Polish government and converted into state domains. In many places the Polish administrators took over farms, which had been stripped of everything, when the Russians departed. There were neither machines nor cattle, and they had to be run on the most primitive lines. The Germans, who had up to then lived as collective farm workers on these estates, now became farm labourers under the Polish administrators. They received, however, much worse rations and wages than the Polish farm labourers.

The Poles gradually began to employ tractors and machines on the government estates, and then the work was carried on more thoroughly[312]). On the other hand the small farms, which were in the possession of Polish settlers, continued to be entirely neglected for a long time[313]).

According to Polish sources 63.3% of agricultural land lay still fallow in 1946, and in 1948 the area of uncultivated land still amounted to 24.6%[314]). From this it is clear to what a small extent the Polish government was able to administer the very fertile and intensively cultivated East German territories and to exploit their capacity. This applies also to the way in which the Polish government settled their Polish subjects on the land, and they emptied this land as quickly as possible and thoroughly of its native population.

We have already described how the settlement of Poles in East Germany was scarcely organized, until towards the end of the year 1945, and how this work was in general left to the arbitrary whims of individual Poles and of subordinate Polish authorities. In this regard there was a gradual change towards the end of the year. On the 13. November 1945 a special "Ministry for regained territories" was founded[315]). This ministry was among other things the competent authority for the settlement of Poles in the east German territories, according to plan. For altough the east German territories were a kind of happy hunting ground for Polish settlers, the settlement remained, up to the end of the year 1945, far behind the desires of the Polish government. Up to this time only about 1.7 million Poles had settled in Germany[316]). After the establishment of the "Ministry for regained territories" the settling of Poles in East Germany was pushed forward, by every conceivable means possible.

For it was the chief object of the Polish government to prove how very necessary their claim was to East German *Provinzes*, as a reception territory for the superfluous population of Poland. Further they wanted to give these old German territories a Polish character as quickly as possible.

Simultaneously with the expulsion of the Germans, which reached its peak in the year 1946[317]), a systematic propaganda was commenced all over Poland for people to settle in the east German territories As only about 1.4 million Poles from the territory on the other side of the Bug, which had been ceded to Russia, were repatriated and settled in East Germany, the settlement propaganda was directed the more vigorously to the population of Central Poland, and above all to the soldiers, who had been discharged at the end of the war[318]). There was further the desire to get those Poles, who as a result of the war and even earlier had wandered into Central and West Germany, indeed even into other West European states, to settle in the previous German eastern territories. These people belonged to the category of 'Displaced Persons'.

The Polish commissions, who were making propaganda for settlers, tried to obtain settlers for the German eastern territories under Polish administration, even from among miners of Polish origin, who had been living for generations in the district of the Ruhr and in France[319]).

In the year 1946 this Polish propaganda for settlement had reached its peak. According to Polish sources the number of the Poles who were in the territories of East Germany had increased from the Polish census of the

14. February 1946 until the 1. January 1947 by almost 2.5 million and had reached a total of 4 584 000. Among these there were about a million persons who were German citizens, but who had lived there before and were claimed by the Poles as autochthonous, and this was in spite of the fact that the vast majority of them had declared themselves to be Germans. Of the Poles who were settled in the eastern territories of Germany by the end of 1946 about 1.4 million had come from East Poland, which had been ceded to Russia, 237 000 were repatriated Polish displaced persons from Central and West Europe, and about 1 950 000 had been re-settled, from the Central and South Polish government districts, in the eastern territories of Germany.

In the following years the Polish population in the parts of East Germany administered by the Poles increased only slowly. At the end of 1948 the population was just over 5 million, and by 1952 had increased to approximately 6 million[320]). When one considers that this includes about a million persons of previous German nationality, then we find that only about 5 million Poles had been settled in the East German territory under Polish administration, whereas before the war there had been about 8.5 million Germans in the same territories. For the million Germans alluded to included partly the autochthonous ones, that is to say Masurians, Ermians, Kaschubians and East Upper Silesians who were claimed by the Poles on account of their dialect and names, and it also included indispensable German workmen, who had not been expelled and had been compelled to choose Polish citizenship[321]) [322]).

We see from the following table the variation in the density of the Polish population in the different East German *Provinzes* and its proportion to the densitiy of the German population before the war[323]).

East German *Provinzes* (frontiers of the later Polish Government Districts)	Position on 17. 5. 1939		Position on 1. 10. 1948	
	Number of German Population	Number per square kilometre	Number of Population (Germans remaining at home and settled Poles)	Number per square kilometre
South-East Prussia (Polish government district Bialystock and Allenstein)	1 061 000	48	617 500	27
East Pomerania (Government district Stettin)	1 786 000	59.3	1 005 900	35
East Brandenburg (Government district Grünberg)	661 100	59.5	401 500	36
Lower Silesia (Government district Breslau)	3 062 000	124.2	1 905 200	79
Upper Silesia (Government district Oppeln)	1 516 800	156.1	1 291 700	133

It is evident from the foregoing table that the settlement of Poles in the territories of East Germany did not compensate in a single *Provinz* the depopulation, which had been caused by the expulsions, and that, therefore, the capacity of the population and the productivity of these territories under Polish administration were quite inadequately utilized.

Breslau, which in 1939 had considerably over 600 000 inhabitants, had in 1949 exactly 300 000, and the situation was the same in Danzig and Stettin.

By the end of 1946 almost all the small farms had passed into Polish hands[324]). It was, however, the settlement on the larger farms which caused more difficulty. As a result of the Polish land reform, which made it impossible for anyone to own more than a hundred hectares[325]), these larger farms could not pass into the possession of private Poles. On the other hand Polish settlers were not interested in being mere farm labourers on government domains. The Poles, therefore, began with the so-called co-operative system of settlement. This was a kind of mixture between collective farms and private property on the larger estates. Similary to what had happered in the Soviet zone of occupation this led to a splitting into lots of many large estates, which were first of all taken over by the Polish government. But this land could not be properly worked on, because there was a great lack of farm landowners as a result of the expulsion of the Germans[326]).

This procedure of dividing up the large German estates is at the present time still going on, but it is already evident that the greater portion will continue to be government property, as the settlement of Poles is now in general at an end[327]). The result of the expropriation and the expulsion of the Germans and the settlement of the Poles is, that at the present time there are in the east territories of Germany either only large farms or little ones up to twenty hectares. The rural middle-class has very much decreased, with the result that the standard of life of the Polish farming population has sunk very much, in comparison with that of the previous German owners[328]).

The same as in the other states of the East Block and in the Soviet zone of Germany there has begun also in Poland, since 1949, a progressively more radical sovietization in all branches of life. This began as early as the years 1945 and 1946, when there were still millions of Germans in the districts to the east of the Oder and Neisse which were under Polish administration. This process has contributed very considerably to the lives of the Germans becoming continually more insupportable, under the administration of the Poles.

The measures taken by the Communist Polish government against the Germans had, together with the radicalism, which is a feature of Communism, aggravated the already existing national differences, by reason of what was done against the Germans as owners of property. In this way the persecution and suppression of the Germans, for reasons of revenge against the former power of occupation, were also enormously aggravated. Outlawry, prohibition to own property, famine, disease and forced labour had reduced the greater part of the German population east of the Oder and Neisse to a condition of apathetic vegetating. Steps were taken to openly brand-mark the Germans as outcasts, and for this purpose they were forced to wear white bands round their arms[329]). It was, therefore, not surprising that many of the Germans regarded the order of expulsion as a relief, because they had become long before estranged from their home.

The fact that the expulsions extended over a long period of time and did not cease until between the years 1947 and 1948 amounted to years of oppression for many of the Germans living in East Prussia, East Pomerania and East Brandenburg. However, the German population continued to hope and believe that things would become better. This was in a great measure caused by the rumours continually circulated, to the effect that there would be a change and that the Polish rule would cease. Finally, however, all these hopes were cruelly ended by the expulsions The conclusion of the expulsions from the eastern territories of the *Reich* came in general at the end of 1947. This is a landmark in the process of the de-germanization and the polonization of East Germany.

The Polish administration had, as far as possible, obliterated any memory of the German past by the removal of names and signs and their substitution by Polish names and Polish institutions. At the end of May 1946 the division of the land into Polish government districts destroyed the historic traditions of the old German east *Provinzes*[330]). Finally the expulsion of the native German population made it quite clear, that the Polish government regarded these territories not only as under its administration but also as an organic part of Poland At the end of 1948 the 'Ministry for regained territories' was dissolved, and the German territories to the east of the Oder and the Neisse were incorporated by an administrative act in the Polish State. This was contrary to all notions of international law[331]).

By this act Poland made it clear, that it did not regard its administration of East Germany as a provisional arrangement according to the decision of Potsdam, but that it was determined to retain these *Provinzes* for good as a part of Poland. The polonization of the German *Provinzes* to the east of the Oder and the Neisse was to be in this way legally concluded.

4. The fate of the German population in the territory of the Polish State[332])

After the Red Army had seized the eastern half of Poland and Lublin had fallen into its hands in the summer of 1944 the "Polish Committee for National Liberation" was formed on the 22. July 1944. The purpose of this committee was to take over the management of all matters of civil administration. All the members of this committee were also members of the "Union of Polish patriots". The Communists living in exile in Russia had joined this Union. Under the influence of the Soviet Union, which pronounced the Committee of Lublin to be the sole legal representative of Poland, the Committee declared itself on the 1. January 1945 to be the Provisional Government of Poland. This was in defiance of the Polish exile government in London[333]).

Immediately after its formation, the "Polish Committee for National Liberation" made an agreement with the Soviet Commander in Chief in Poland on the 26. July 1945. According to this agreement, all the parts of the Polish territory, which were not in the immediate neighbourhood of the fighting[334]), came under the administration of the Committee.

According to this agreement the administration of Central Poland and its western territories passed over to the Polish authorities and militia. This happened as soon as the Russians had marched in. Shortly afterwards the Russian local Headquarters departed. The authorities of the re-established Polish State henceforth decided the fate of the Germans, and these were subjected to special legislation and political measures.

When the Russian army prepared for its attack, there were about 1.6 million Germans living in the territory which had belonged to Poland before the war. It is only possible to estimate approximately the number of those who remained, in their homes or had returned there, after their flight had proved unsuccessful. One must, however, assume, that about a half of the German population, that is to say about 800 000 Germans, were still in Polish territory when the Polish Communists took over the administration from the Red Army.

It is not possible to understand the misery, which came over these Germans, without being acquainted with the history of a bitter struggle amongst different national minorities which had been going on for twenty-years. In the course of this struggle hundreds of thousands of Germans had been driven from their homes, in accordance with the Treaty of Versailles which ordered the cession of German territory. Only a small number of these Germans were able to remain in Posen and West Prussia[335]), and their situation had got continually worse since 1933. When World War II broke out these Germans were the victims of terrible excesses which cost thousands of them their lives, and this was particularly so in the case of Bromberg.

Finally the radical measures of the National Socialist politicians, which aimed at the destruction of the Polish upper classes and the reduction of the Polish people to a state of serfdom, led to a violent hatred on the part of all Poles, and an even so passionate desire for revenge. This led to not lesser wrongs following on wrongs already done and incensed different groups of an excitable people to terrible excesses. Thus with the entry of the Soviet troops there began a period of terrible suffering and privation for the Germans, who were still in the territory of the re-established Polish State. After having been the victims of the violence of Soviet soldiers, they were now made responsible for what the German force of occupation had done, merely because they were members of the same people.

There were public excesses against whole groups and columns of Germans, who were being brought into camps or doing clearing-up work, as for instance in Warsaw, Lodz, Konitz and other towns[336]). This all demonstrates what measure of hostility and hatred had spread against people, who whether they were guilty or innocent, had to pay for what unscrupulous elements had done in the name of the people to which they belonged.

Germans from the *Reich*, resettlers from East and South East Europe, and also old ethnic German families were victims of the spontaneous outbursts and measures of the authorities. Since the entry of the Red Army these had been exercised against all Germans in the Polish *Provinzes*. In many parts these Germans had to wear badges and white armbands, also swastikas, which could be seen from a long distance; this was doubtlessly meant to refer to the policy of the National Socialists against the Jews[337]). Being marked in this way as Germans, they became the objects of insults and ill-treatment, which were often committed by young people and members of the militia.

During the days and weeks following the entry of the Russians, numberless Germans were arbitrarily arrested, without reason, by the Polish authorities, tortured by guards, discharged and re-arrested.

The Poles were intoxicated with an uncontrollable sense of victory and revenge. This led particularly in the towns to mass demonstrations. But also in the remotest parts and smallest places the result was at least that the property of the Germans was continually plundered, in fact their clothes were often torn from them in the streets and they were fetched for the dirtiest forced labour, just according to the whim of the people and the need of the moment. The German women had to suffer most, for they were molested day and night by Russian soldiers and many of them preferred suicide to such an intolerable existence[338]). In a few cases the lot of individual Germans was slightly alleviated, when a friendship with Polish families rendered them protection against the molesting of Russian soldiers, plunderings and other violence. Such cases, however, amounted only to slight differences in a fate which was terrible for whomsoever it affected. There was a reign of retaliation and revenge.

When we consider the crimes committed against Poles and Polish Jews, during the time of the German occupation, we can understand this behaviour of the Poles but we can under no circumstances excuse it. For, particularly in the year 1945, the Polish authorities and security police made no serious endeavour to find out the guilty Germans and to punish them. However, everyone gave vent to his feelings of revenge blindly, and attacked all Germans although they must have known that those whom they insulted, ill-treated, arrested and killed were as a rule not the guilty ones and often knew nothing at all about the crimes committed. The blind rage with which all Germans, without distinction, were the victims of such persecutions, even in cases where the demand for retribution was justified, was demonstrated, when in the autumn of 1945 and the spring of 1946 different mass graves of Poles, who had been murdered during the German occupation, were opened and the corpses brought to cemeteries of honour. For Germans were compelled by raging masses of spectators to bury the corpses again and, when doing so, were the victims of insults and ill-treatment of the very worst kind.

We must make a distinction between the systematic measures of the Polish State for oppressing everything German and such spontaneous expression of revenge and national passion, as we have just described. A copious legislation, with an abundance of very elastic orders for carrying it out, afforded the means of getting at every German, who was within the scope of the re-established Polish State. Two groups of laws formed the basis for the persecution of the Germans: the decrees concerning "the measure of punishment for the Fascist criminals of Hitlerism", a collection of decrees concerning "security measures against betrayers of the nation" and concerning "the elimination of hostile elements", later "of persons of German nationality from the Polish community".

The decree of the 31. August 1944 concerning "the measure of punishment for Fascist criminals of Hitlerism"[339]) was in the first instance directed only against persons, whose conduct during the German occupation had led to the damage of Polish civilians and prisoners of war. The amended decree of the 11. December 1946[340]) extended the liability to punishment and made people subject to punishment particularly for merely having belonged to "criminal organizations". In this way numbers of arrests were subsequently legalized. Many Germans were arrested on mere suspicion, solely because they were Germans, during the wave of arrests following immediately after the invasion of the Red Army. Without any legal formality they were thrown into prisons and penitentiaries and sometimes remained there years, until they were brought up for judgement.

The great number of arbitrary arrests of Germans, often based on the mere words of sycophants, were indeed provoked by laws capable of different interpretations containing stipulations which were not clear and ambiguously formulated. For instance the decree of the 31. August 1944[341]) for the punishment of Fascist crimes could be applied to the most trivial happenings, by reason of the passage in this decree, that he was subject to punishment who had participated in "the brutal treatment or persecution of civilians or prisoners of war" or had "compelled them to work by threatening arrest and handing them over to the power of occupation". For every order given by Germans to Polish prisoners of war could if necessary be interpreted into "compulsion to work under threats". Further many a charge of "brutal treatment" was in many cases solely based upon mere allegations and presumptions. Likewise the order that the Polish security authorities (militia and secret service) were under the obligation to arrest a man merely on the basis of suspicion[342]) must necessarily lead to even the malicious words of sycophants sufficing for the arrest of Germans.

The terribly high number of arrests, which took place arbitrarily or on the ground of inadequate suspicion, were the more serious for all those who were once arrested, because there was practically no possibility of their being discharged, even when it had become evident that the accusation was without foundation. As in most cases the property of those arrested had been distrained upon, their discharge would have led to fresh difficulties, and, therefore, the more simple method of questionings was resorted to. In the course of these questionings those arrested were often subjected to severe torture, so that they confessed to crimes which they had never committed. These questionings, the purpose of which was to find points of accusation to be submitted to the Extraordinary Courts, often led to the very worst tortures, to which many Germans succumbed[343]).

Thousands of Germans, who were caught by the Red Army on their flight or in their homes, were victims of the mass arrests which took place immediately after the Russians had marched in. The large penitentiaries of Poland, in particular Fordon, near Bromberg, Graudenz, Krone-on-Brahe, Lodz, Mokotow in Warsaw and also the smaller prisons in the district towns, were soon overfilled with arrested persons. These persons were brutally treated, absolutely underfed and compelled to carry out the hardest forms of penal work. Many of these persons did not survive and died as a result of the hardships. Others were deported to Russia, in cases where the Russians compelled the Polish authorities to hand over prisoners to them.

The great majority of those arrested, however, spent many years in Polish prisons. It was not until 1946 and 1947 that they were brought up for judgement; most of them were then sentenced to at least three years imprisonment. The period, during which they were on remand, was reckoned for them in different ways[344]).

When they had finished their sentences they were, however, not liberated but were put into a camp with forced labour, according to their condition of health. These measures against the Germans in Poland were also applied in a milder form to the German population of the Free City of Danzig and of the previous government district of West Prussia, both of which had been incorporated in the Polish government district of Danzig, by the decree of 30. April 1945. Many inhabitants of these parts were also arrested, thrown into the prisons of Danzig and later on transferred to Fordon near Bromberg, in order to be interned in labour camps after their discharge from prison.

The second more comprehensive group of laws against the German population was the series of "security measures against betrayers of the nation". This legislation defined as "betrayer of the nation a Polish citizen, who during the German occupation, had declared that he belonged to the German nation or was of German descent, or when he had in fact taken advantage of the rights and privileges accruing to his belonging to the German nation or to his being of German descent"[345]).

The classifications, which had been adopted in the course of the National Socialist ethnic policy, for distinguishing between Germans and Poles in the occupied and incorporated eastern territories were by the Polish legislation made the basis for prosecuting "betrayers of the nation". In the territory of the *Generalgouvernement* the category of those of "German descent" applied, and in the *Reichsgau Wartheland* and the other parts of the incorporated eastern territories where the distinction had gone still further, those on the German People's List applied. These latter were divided into four categories according to the degree of their "German descent" (People's List 1—4), further there was applied the group of "Poles with achievement"[346]). All these persons, who had been preferentially treated by the National Socialist government, had received special identity cards from the German authorities. These identity cards were now used by the Poles to show that these people were collaborators and traitors, so that they came automatically undere the Polish penal laws in question. The most important of these laws, the decree of the 28. February 1945 concerning the "elimination from the community of those hostile to the Polish nation"[347]), provided for certain possibilities for rehabilitation only for those on the People's Lists 2—4 and also for the group of "Poles with achievement". If these people could prove, that they had been put into the different groups against their will and under compulsion and had further shown by their conduct that they belonged to the Polish nation[348]) and were furthermore prepared to make a declaration of loyalty to the Polish State, they could be rehabilitated[349]).

The consequences of being eliminated from the Polish community were as follows: confiscation of property, forced labour and residence in isolation[350]).

In the laws passed in the years 1944 and 1945 there was a quite general definition of elimination of "hostile elements"; later in the decree of the 13. September 1946 it was expressly stipulated, that the "elimination of persons of German nationality from the Polish community" was meant[351]), and it was stipulated that a positive declaration of belonging to the German nation was to be the criterion of German nationality. In this regard such declarations, made during the war, were not in themselves alone to be regarded as decisive[352]), because one only wanted to get at real Germans but not at all persons who, owing to the force of circumstances during the war, had formally declared themselves to be Germans. The result of being eliminated from the Polish community was according to Article 4 of the Decree of the 13. September 1946, that such persons had to be expelled from Polish territory.

The national expulsion policy of the Polish government was completed formally with the law of the 20. July 1950[353]). This law had already a purely communist tendency, and contrary to the policy of the first post-war years, which was based upon nationalism tendencies, it aimed at increasing the "power of the people". All proceedings against Polish citizens, who during the war had declared themselves to be Germans or to be of German descent, were stopped and no fresh ones were begun. Those affected again received their full rights as citizens.

As, however, the great number of ethnic Germans resident in Poland had been driven out by the spring of 1950, this law naturally brought relief only to those, who had been "rehabilitated". For the Germans in Poland their years of persecution were not terminated by this piece of legislation but by their expulsion.

The sufferings of the Germans in Poland are not evident merely from the texts of the legislation, but we first get a picture of them from the personal reports informing us, how the different laws were applied and what consequences they had for the Germans. The measures of expropriation, internment and forced labour show us really in what position the German population in fact was.

One of the first serious measures, which the Polish government took against the German population, was the confiscation of their property without indemnification. This was carried out in different ways and was terminated by the end of May in 1945. It began by individual Poles taking possession of the dwellings, houses and farms, immediately after the Russians had marched in.

After the passing of the decree of the 28. February 1945, which ordered the expropriation of the Germans in general[354]), the Polish authorities legalized the procedure of the individual Poles, who had already taken the law into their own hands. As the flood of Poles grew, the expropriations were extended to organized actions against whole villages between March and May 1945, and the Germans were summarily expelled from their farms and houses.
New owners were put in, and the way, in which this was done, already showed the influence of the Communist Party.

In addition to the Polish resettlers from the territories of Poland, which had been annexed by Russia, Polish farm labourers, who had worked for German farmers, received special consideration in the distribution of German property. A large number of German estates, as far as they had not come under the administration of the Russian army, were subject to the land reform, and, after being divided up into lots, were distributed among Polish settlers.

Many Poles, when they took over their new property, allowed the expropriated Germans to remain there, either in order not to reduce them at once to a state of misery or to use them as workers. These Germans, who had been dispossessed of their ancestral farms, had to live in attics, barns and lumber rooms They became mere slaves of the new Polish owners and had to do the very hardest work for a minimum of food. They were often the victims of chicanery and ill-treatment.

Others were on the other hand immediately driven away from their own property by the new Polish owners, without any consideration being shown by these intruders for aged people and children. These expellees were not even allowed to pack the ordinary necessaries of life. Without a roof, famishing and freezing they wandered about, until they finally found refuge in the ruins of buildings, in cow-sheds, pig-pens etc., with relatives or sympathizing Poles. The latter brought themselves into danger by giving shelter to these Germans.

This lot was particularly hard for those ethnic Germans, who during the years 1939/1940 had already lost their homes in East and South-East Europe, as a result of the resettlement policy of the National Socialist Government. They had been settled in the then *Reichsgau Wartheland* on farms, the Polish owners of which had been first of all removed. The latter now often returned in the wake of the Russian troops and vented their anger on the homeless resettlers who had against their will become entangled in the National Socialist policy.

These German resettlers were no longer able to return to their old homes in the Baltic countries, in Rumania or Jugoslavia. Many ethnic Germans from Russia suffered a particularly bitter lot. For many of them, especially those who had come and settled in *Reichsgau Wartheland* during the retreat of the German troops from Russia in 1943 and 1944, were seized in 1945 by the Soviet troops and deported to penal camps in Russia. It may be safely assumed, that a great number of them perished there[355]).

The result of the expropriation decree of the 28. February 1945 was that the Germans in Poland were totally dispossessed of all their property and fortunes. This was quite different from what happened in the eastern territories of the *Reich*. Here the process of impoverishment was gradual, because the Polish settlers trickled in slowly[356]). The German population, however, in Polish territory was at a stroke deprived of all they possessed and exposed to material distress. They were reduced as a national minority, possessing no rights, to the very lowest level. As a result of this radical expropriation all the Germans in Polish territory were in May 1945 torn out of their homes and put into internment camps behind barbed wire. The ethnic Germans were robbed of their liberty, eliminated from the Polish community and called up for long years of forced labour, before being finally expelled from the country.

Owing to their internment and the terrible kinds of forced labour, which they had zu carry out, the lot of the Germans in Polish territory was much worse than that of the Germans in the east *Provinzes* of the *Reich*. Not only were the ethnic Germans, whose families had lived for generations in Poland, put into labour camps, but also the German resettlers in the *Reichsgau Wartheland* and those *Reich* Germans who had remained in Poland. The latter were, however, released sooner and then expelled.

The forced labour by the Germans began immediately after the occupation of the territory, and consisted of entrenchment and clearing up work behind the front. The German women had to suffer the rough chicanery of the militia, were continually molested and raped by Russian soldiers, had to dig out corpses, bury the carcasses of animals, carry away munition and other war material, to make roads and streets passable and to clean up houses. For doing all this they received a starvation diet[357]).

Later on there was a systematic calling up of workers for agriculture and industry. A network of labour camps was laid out all over the country in order to get at the great number of people subject to forced labour and to put them on to their work as planned. To begin with the internment camps, which had been set up in the course of the expropriation work, were used for this purpose. In the course of the years 1945/1946 the number of these camps was reduced, and all the Germans interned in Polish territory were collected in the great central labour camps already existing at Potulice near Bromberg, Gronowo near Lissa and Sikawa near Lodz. These camps were not closed by the Polish government until the years 1949 and 1950.

Almost all the Germans in Poland were brought into these camps in the course of time, comparatively late, however, the German inhabitants of the larger towns, for instance Posen, Bromberg and Lodz, who had been expelled from their houses and in many cases lived for a long time in ruins and cellars[358]) In the central camps they were all registered and also those who since their expropriation had been working on farms and in industry. Sick people and those incapable of working remained permanently in camps, and also able-bodied persons had to return there for future occupation, as soon as they had terminated their previous work[359]). When being quartered, in "main camps" or being sent away for work at a distance, members of families were ruthlessly torn apart.

Numerous transports of interned German forced labourers were sent from the camps to the industrial district of Upper Silesia, and others to Warsaw for clearing-up work. Most of the occupants of the camps, however, were sent in groups or separately to work on the state domains or private farms[360]) In order to gain as high a profit as possible from the labour of the Germans, the procedure was soon adopted of demanding a hire price from everyone using German workers. In this way the assembly camps became kinds of slave markets on which German workers were offered for sale and sold. Polish farmers and industrialists chose the men and women who seemed suitable. The hire price was about a tenth of the normal wages of a Polish workman[361]). It was no wonder that there was a great demand for German workers and that the Germans were often the objects of bargaining, by which many Polish managers of camps enriched themselves. The cheap work of the interned Germans was the reason for the expulsion, which was decided upon for all Germans in the decree of the 13. December 1946, being very unpopular and for attempts being made to delay it[362]).

That the Germans thus were suddenly appreciated because of their cheap work, rather increased the humilation, to which they were reduced. It certainly did not conduce to improving their situation. They were defenseless, and the very hardest work was forced upon them, further they lived in the most wretched quarters and received bad food, without wages and medical attention. In addition to this they were infested with vermin and diseases and exposed to insults and chicanery. Their existence was that of slaves and reduced them to spiritual wrecks, ruined their health and cost many of them their lives.

Nevertheless, the interned Germans applied for work, especially on farms. For there was always the chance, that they would come into the hands of humane Polish employers. Further, work afforded the possibility of escaping the torments in camps and also of getting additional food. Individual skilled workers succeeded after a time in again obtaining a certain amount of liberty.

On the other hand the life of aged and sick people and of children was absolutely hopeless, for they were despised because of their inability to work and had to pass years and years in internment camps. Their sufferings were indescribable, for they were unable to escape the tormenting chicanery and the often sadist cruelty of their guards[363]). They had to be satisfied with the underfeeding in the camps, which was often reduced by the dishonesty of the guards. Owing to their total exhaustion they were helpless, without medicaments, plagued by vermin, deprived of the possibility of the most primitive means of looking after their bodies, and pined away and perished. German medical personnel were powerless to do anything against this misery, because they had no means of helping. Typhoid epidemics raged particularly in the summer and autumn of 1945 in many camps and swept great numbers away. The number of deaths was also increased by the systematic shooting of old and helpless sick people, which was done for instance in the camp of Kaltwasser. There were also acts of violence and torturings on the part of the guards, who were often incensed by the desire to imitate the methods of National Socialist concentration camps. In the home for the aged in the camp of Potulice more than the half of all the inmates died between 1947 and 1949.

It will never be possible to state how many people died in the Polish internment camps between 1945 and 1950. The number of deaths, even in cases where they were registered, has been kept secret by the managers of the camps.

Mass graves were partly obliterated, planted with vegetables and made unrecognizable as such. It was prohibited to put crosses with names on graves. The internment was a fatal catastrophe for German children, as the Poles resorted in the summer of 1945 to the measure of rigorously separating them from their mothers; the purpose was to exploit the capacity of the latter to work to a maximum. Almost all infants died. Bigger children lived in hutments separated from their parents and left to themselves. Their food became better later, thanks to the help of the International Red Cross. It was, however, not possible to prevent their demoralization[364]).

The Polish government regarded the children separated from their parents as State property, and did its best to polonize them. They were brought into children's homes, and many had to starve there, because these homes were overfilled. They were also allotted to Polish families. Every form of correspondence with the parents was prohibited, and only some of the desperate mothers succeeded in contacting their children illegally[365]). A great number of these mothers succeeded in the course of the next years in getting back their estranged children, who often could only speak Polish. Many of these women, on the other hand, were finally expelled, without ever again seeing their children. In other cases the Polish families refused to give back the children who had been handed over to them. There were some cases where payment for the food of the children was made the condition of their being returned. This was, of course, impossible for the mothers who were doing forced labour without wages. They also had to leave their homes without their children, unless Poles who felt sorry for them, gave them the money[366]). Still at the present time, eight years after the end of the war, the Enquiry Service of the German Red Cross is trying by negotiating to get these children back for their parents.

The conditions of life of the ethnic Germans were the most intolerable of all between 1945 and 1946, and they only began to get gradually better in the following years. Among the masses of the Polish people, the feelings of hatred and revenge had died down. The opposition to the Communist government in their own country and their dependence upon the Soviet Union influenced the feelings of many Poles and decreased the hostility towards the Germans.

However, the life of the German population had meanwhile become hopeless. Existence under the oppressive demands of forced labour and the lack of every kind of liberty in the internment camps still in 1949 had become such a torture and discouraged them to such an extent, that, after the total loss of their homes and their possessions, they came to regard even a measure such as expulsion as liberation from the depth of human sufferings.

Third Section

I. The expulsion of the German population from the territories east of the Oder and Neisse

The expulsion of the German population from the territories east of the Oder and Neisse is the chief event in the whole procedure, and this although it was merely the last phase, which involved the total expulsion of the east German population, and also, although it was the end of an insupportable state of affairs and amounted to salvation from indescribable persecution and suffering. All previous events, as has already been shown in connection with the flight[367]), are only to be regarded as part of the total procedure of expulsion, because they all finally terminated in actual expulsion. They were the immediate forerunners of the expulsion just as the persecutions and injustices under Russian and Polish rule were. Indeed this was their premeditated aim, and as in the case of the flight from the Red Army, they were stamped as forcible expulsion, when this expulsion was officially decided upon.

The decision to expel the East German population was in a certain degree something subsidiary, which resulted from the negotiations of the West Powers with the Soviet Union and the representatives of Poland. As a result, however, of the storm which it brought about, it is today for an observer one of the most serious measures, which were resorted to at the end of the war.

The idea of the Oder and Neisse as west frontier of Poland caused the West Allies to endeavour to satisfy the claims of Soviet Russia to East Poland, and at the same time to create a strong Poland, which was to be done, by compensating its loss of territory in the east by considerable increase in the north and west[368]).

In order to get the representatives of Poland to agree to the transfer of Polish territory from east to west, it would be necessary to find new territory in East Germany, for the Poles from those territories which had been ceded to Russia, to the east of the Curzon Line. According to an amazing piece of logic it was argued, that for this purpose the east German population must be resettled. Thus the whole appeared to be a harmless and by no means inhuman "exchange or transfer of population".

The expulsion of the East German population was thus the last link in a long chain of modifications, on the political and ethnographical map, in the east of Central Europe. These modifications began in East Poland but were all based upon the hypothesis that East Germany would be handed over to Poland. Here it must be added, that the demand by the Poles for the annexation of parts of East Germany belonged, quite apart from the later idea of compensation, to the Polish war policy and war propaganda.

Both the economic and political consequences, which a separation of East Germany and the transfer of the population to the west must necessarily have in the remainder of Germany and further in all Europe, as also the humanitarian and juridical side of these actions, were hardly taken into consideration in the years 1943 and 1944, when the idea of an Oder Neisse frontier and the expulsion became the programme of the Allies. For the sole aim of their war policy was to defeat National Socialist Germany.

The feelings of bitterness, which arise in every war, were increased among the enemies of Germany in the Second World War, owing to the National Socialist measures in the occupied territories, and this increased the tendency also of the Allies now to resort to radical measures of violence which had not been well thought over. It is only possible in this way to understand how not only the Soviet Union but also the West Allies were agreed to a post-war policy, which provided for the expulsion by force of many millions of Germans. It is true that, before the end of the war, Churchill in particular raised objections to such a policy at the Conference of Yalta in February 1945. His objections, however, were directed only against the excessive amount of territory being demanded by the Poles, and not on principle against the expulsion as such[369]).

Since the conference of Teheran the enemies of Germany had been agreed on principle to the expulsion of the German population from the territories to be ceded to Poland. The opinion was, however, that it would in this way be possible to settle the problem of German-Polish minorities once and for all. For this problem had, since the First World War, repeatedly been the subject of international negotiations, and had also conduced to the outbreak of the Second World War.

There now seemed to be historical precedence for solving this problem radically. In this regard the President of the U.S.A. expressly cited the expulsion of the Greeks from Turkey in 1923[370]). This had in fact led to foreign political pacification, but had involved the greatest suffering for the people concerned.

There is no doubt that also the National Socialist policy was guilty of measures such as the resettlement and transfer of millions of people, for the purpose of achieving a new political order of things.

Immediately after the German-Polish war of 1939 the National Socialist government had begun with the expulsion of Poles from West Prussia and from the former *Provinz* of Posen; it did, however, very soon terminate this action before it had assumed greater dimensions. The resettlement of ethnic Germans, for instance out of the Baltic States, Bessarabia and the Bucovina was, however, carried out with more thoroughness. This resettlement was based upon treaties, and was declared partially to be an exchange of populations. It had, however, created a precedent for expelling people and making them into nomads, and this, solely for the purpose of finding room for others. All that can be regarded as good, in the policy of resettling ethnic Germans was that they were saved from becoming Bolshevists.

.Both the settlement policy of Hitler in a territory widely extended by violence to the east, after the victory over Poland, and the expulsion of the East German population, in an incomparably greater degree, from the German territories, now unter the Russian and Polish domination can be regarded as the radical realization and as the turning point of the idea of the national state. Indeed they signify that stage where the logical consequences of national thinking lead to absurdity.

In this way the assimilation of peoples within the area of a state had been converted into a "purge" within such an area, and in the course of this procedure the frontiers were determined by sole considerations of power politics Both the frontier extended by Hitler to the east, and the Oder Neisse frontier decided upon in the Potsdam Agreement were violations of the nationalities of the peoples, living in these territories in the east of Central Europe. These things were done contrary to the right notions of national states, because there was the desire to re-estabilish the unity of the frontiers of states and peoples by subsequently carrying out expulsions and resettlements. And this made such a solution by violence worse.

The Allies had been planning the cession of large parts of East Germany to the Poles and the expulsion of the Germans there since the beginning of 1944[371]), and the Big Three had been in principle unanimous on this decision, months before the end of the war. This fact caused the Red Army, which had been marching into East Germany since the beginning of January 1945, and the Polish authorities following in its wake, to thoroughly work in advance on the expulsion, before it was officially carried out.

Marshall Stalin had told Churchill at Yalta, in order to appease him, that only a few Germans would remain behind when the Soviet troops marched into East Germany[372]). From this it is clear, that the flight of the East German population, and perhaps even its being furthered by radical conduct on the part of the Russian troops, were regarded as a welcome preparation in consideration of the subsequent expulsion which was intended. It is also probable that later Soviet measures, such as the deportation of hundreds of thousands of East German civilians to the Soviet Union aimed at facilitating the future expulsion, by decreasing the number of those Germans living to the east of the Oder and Neisse.

Such an assumption is still more justfied in the case of the action taken by the provisional Polish government. For, when it was administering large districts of East Germany by its authorities and militia in the spring of 1945, it had stated in connection with the question of the expulsion of the East German population, that it was to be hoped that the Red Army, had already sent "all grown-up Germans to the interior of Russia for re-building work"[373]).

At the Potsdam Conference the Poles gave the assurance, that a great number of Germans would willingly leave the territory east of the Oder and Neisse when this came under the authority of Poland[374]. This shows the intention of the Polish government, even if not definitely uttered, to do all it possibly could, in order to decrease the east German population, before their expulsion and to subject them to a treatment, which would very soon destroy their desire to remain in their country.

As we have seen from the fate of Germans, to the east of the Oder and Neisse under Russian and Polish government, both the decrease of the population and also their estrangement from their country was achieved, in a shocking degree, even before the actual expulsion began. In this connection it is of little importance, whether this result was achieved with premeditation or without such, or mainly owing to revenge and retaliation, or owing to the endeavour to get rich at the expense of the Germans, or in other ways.

It is, however, an absolute fact that the conduct of the Red Army, which caused masses of East Germans to flee in panic amounted to expulsion by other means. It is further a fact that the innumerable excesses, the humiliations and the violence, which the East German population had to suffer under the government of the Russians and Poles, amounted in every respect to preparation for the expulsion itself.

This applies in as much as the majority of the survivors were reduced to a level of mere vegetating, and that estrangement from their homes, the withdrawal of legal protection and the deprivation of every means of existence had been carried out, before the last step was taken to officially expel them.

The reports of many individuals show that the act of official expulsion was no longer felt by those affected to be the arbitrary step which it was, because it had been preceded by even more brutal acts of violence. This shows how rigorous the preparation for expulsion was during the period that the Russians and Poles were administering the territory to the east of the Oder and Neisse. The intimidation and oppression of the German population had been carried out, with such thoroughness, that the actual expulsion appeared to them to have a quite different significance For it appeared, at the moment at least, to afford the possibility of winning back a part of their lost home, as it amounted to their coming to Germany and being among Germans and to living under conditions which could never be worse than what they had already suffered.

In order to understand the entire process of expulsion, it is indispensable to be quite clear about these things and not to regard and judge the expulsion of the East German population merely from the standpoint of the official action of expulsion.

The expulsion of the German population, which was still in the territory east of the Oder and Neisse, or had returned there after the occupation of East Germany, proceeded in stages which were temporally limited and lasted for several years. It appears only just to have been concluded at the present time.

During this period of many years not only did the Polish methods of expulsion vary, but also the political and economic basis and intentions, which had originally aimed at compelling and speeding up the expulsions of the Germans.

This all gave rise to contradictory actions, with the result that the expulsion of the last Germans, still under Polish government, was more and more delayed. The policy towards the remaining German population aimed, after the expiry of years, no longer at expulsion but, on the contrary, made the departure of the Germans practically impossible. The new purpose was to cause them to remain in the country and become Polish citizens.

At the beginning of the Polish administration of East Germany, their determination to drive the Germans out was unbridled. Even before the Potsdam Conference had met, before the victorious powers had officially decided on the expulsion of the East German population, the Polish authorities began, by systematic pressure and repeated demand, to cause the Germans to depart, or to summarily drive them out of their dwellings.

It was in particular the German population of Danzig which was subjected to this pressure before the Potsdam Agreement. For obvious political reasons the Poles had begun to speed things up by the establishment of their authorities in Danzig, and now for the same reasons the Germans were to be removed from Danzig as quickly as possible.

As early as June 1945 the German population of the town were urgently called upon, by public placards, to depart. Those Germans, who, being worn out by their previous experience of the Russians and Poles, decided to depart, received departure cards from the Polish authorities and were brought in trains over the Oder to the west.

In addition to the public placards, other more rigorous measures were resorted to in order to drive the Germans out. The Polish militia removed Germans by force from whole rows of streets, drove them summarily out of their dwellings and expelled them by rail mostly in the direction of Stettin. Poles eager for booty and also Russian soldiers were led to continual robberies by the regularity with which trains full of expellees departed for the west, passed through Pomerania and arrived at the railway station in Stettin-Scheune. A system of plundering and robbing at the railway stations was frequently organized. Practically not a single German escaped this.

The result of these radical Polish measures and the insuppertable conditions of life was, that the majority of over 100 000 Germans, who had remained in Danzig after its capture and who had not been put into Polish camps or deported for forced labour to Russia, left the town as early as the summer of 1945. At the end of the year 1945, when no expulsions had yet taken place in many other German places to the east of the Oder and Neisse, there were only a few tens of thousands of Germans still living in Danzig.

It is true that the expulsion of the Germans from Danzig had in a large degree been made to appear voluntary. On the other hand, at the end of June 1945, the Poles had begun with more comprehensive and rigorous expulsions elsewhere; these affected not only the whole of East Brandenburg but also the western parts of East Pomerania and Lower Silesia[375]). This was obviously a case not of an action on the part of individual local authorities, but of one being directed from the highest Polish level. At the back of this was very probably the Polish aim of getting the Germans out of the immediate hinterland to the east of the Oder and Neisse, and so of being able definitely to justify the frontier line demanded by the Poles, before the Potsdam Conference had assembled.

It seemed to the Poles to be easier to drive the German population out of the localities near to the Oder and Neisse, as railway transportation would not be necessary and such transportation at this time had been made very difficult owing to destruction and dismantling.

From the Baltic in the north as far as Silesia in the south the whole of the hinterland of the Oder and Neisse, to a depth of 100 to 200 kilometres, got into sudden commotion in the last days of June. Everywhere Polish soldiers appeared and also Polish militia; they occupied the towns and villages, closed the exits, ordered the people to leave their houses and to assemble as quickly as they possibly could. The Germans were driven out of their dwellings and formed into a column, with baggage which they had had to pack together as quickly as they possibly could, and which they had to carry on handcarts and wheelbarrows or on their backs.

This column then moved off in a westerly direction, on the way met other columns and, after tormenting marches, finally reached the Oder or Neisse. On the way they were the victims of robbery and violence on the part of soldiers and members of the militia who were accompanying them[376]). Enormous masses of people soon became congested together who were driven over the few passages over the river available in the direction of the west. On the other bank they were left to themselves in the Soviet occupied territory. In the towns at the passages over the river, particularly in Stettin, Küstrin, Frankfurt, Cottbus and Görlitz there arose, as a result of this sudden expulsion of hundreds of thousands out of East Germany in the last days of June and the following weeks of July, a terrible crowding together of these masses of people accompanied by famine, homelessness and complete desperation. This all amounted to a state of absolute chaos[377]). This state of affairs, was aggravated by the fact, that they all came together with those, who, after their flight from the Red Army, wanted to return to East Germany, but were not allowed to cross the Oder and Neisse[378]).

No stage of the later expulsions was carried out by such inhuman and brutal methods. It amounted in fact to the expulsion of the majority of the population of East Brandenburg, and of many Germans from East Pomerania and Lower Silesia before the conclusion of the Potsdam Agreement.

This action was stopped towards the middle of July, but this was after hundreds of thousands of Germans by the end of June and the beginning of July had been driven from their homes under the most humiliating and dishonourable conditions. This happened obviously as a result of the protests of the Russian commanders, who in different cases had hindered the expulsion of the Germans, and in some cases had not allowed them to cross the Oder[379]).

A further reason for this was undoubtedly, that the Russians were taking into consideration the effect, that this news would have on their West Allies; they also obviously feared that, if these rigorous expulsions were continued, they would have the most serious consequences in the neighbouring part of the Soviet zone of occupation.

It was obviously only due to this fact, that it did not come to a final expulsion in Upper Silesia, although the Poles during the last days of June had begun in the district of the Neisse and neighbourhood, to systematically expel the Germans from their dwellings, and either to put them into camps or to drive them out of the localities in which they were living[380]).

In this case, as also in Lower Silesia, East Brandenburg and East Pomerania the expellees were allowed to return, after having been driven a few kilometres from the places, where they were living; this was because the whole action planned had been suddenly stopped[381]). Even some of those, who had already got to the west of the Oder and Neisse, came back home[382]).

Nevertheless, this stage of expulsion, which had been restricted to two to three weeks, but had all the same been carried out with the utmost rigour, led to about 200 000 to 300 000 people being driven from their homes in the hinterland east of the Oder and Neisse.

Particularly the towns and villages of East Brandenburg were as good as depopulated; the only people who remained behind were such as were working for the Russians or for other reasons, were excepted from the expulsion[383]). There was likewise a very great diminution in the German population, in the western part of the government district of Liegnitz and in that of Stettin

Now that in this way the German population, in the strips of land to the east of the Oder and Neisse, had been thoroughly decimated, it was possible for both Stalin and the representatives of Poland to make the impression on the West Powers at Potsdam, that there were only a few Germans still remaining in the territory east of the Oder and Neisse. This conduced in no small degree to ending the objections of the western statesmen to the expulsion of the Germans[384]).

In Article XIII of the Potsdam Agreement it was officially decided, that the population of East Germany should be expelled, this, however, by no means meant, that all questions involved were clarified. For instance, this article said nothing about the future fate of the German population in that part of East Prussia, which was being administered by the Russians, and the expulsion of the Germans from Poland was based upon the not at all clear expression: "The three governments ... are of opinion that the German population or parts thereof, who have remained in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary, must be transferred to Germany". The article in question contained no definition of what was to be understood by Poland. Nothing was said as to whether the east German territories, which had been put under Polish administration, were affected; the Polish and Russian politicians insisted, that this was so, whereas the statesmen of the West Powers either intentionally or unintentionally did nothing to clarify the matter.

Further Article XIII of the Potsdam Agreement stipulated, that the transfer of the German population was to be carried out "in an orderly and humane manner".

The article also called upon the Polish government to stop the expulsions, until the Control Council had examined the capacity of the different zones of occupation to receive the expellees, and also until a plan of expulsion had been drawn up.

The Polish government by no means observed these stipulations, and, although the plan of expulsion was not signed by the Control Council, until the 17. October 1945[385]), local Polish authorities had as soon as August and

September, particularly in Upper Silesia, collected great numbers of Germans in camps and sent them in transports to the Russian zone of occupation[386]).

In October and November these expulsions were extended without any kind of restriction to Pomerania, the southern part of East Prussia and also to portions of the former *Provinzes* of Posen and West Prussia. The expulsions developed here into a wholesale action[387]).

In some cases the population of whole localities were affected, in others only those incapable of working, but very often the owners of farms. The expulsion of these latter was obviously most closely connected with the arrival of Polish settlers. The population of the villages were made to feel the process of expulsion very painfully[388]). For, during days and weeks after Poles had taken over the farms, the owners were suddenly called upon to leave their dwellings within a half an hour or even ten minutes; this often happened during the night or in the early morning. It was scarcely possible for these people to take anything at all with them, apart from the most necessary clothing. Packed trunks or rucksacks had to be left in the dwellings or at a collection spot, and became a welcome booty for many of the Polish new-comers, or of the village militia. It very rarely happened that the expulsion was announced a few days beforehand.

In Upper Silesia the expulsion in the autumn of 1945 was generally carried out by those, who had been driven out of their dwellings, being first of all collected in camps; these camps were generally in district towns[389]). There they had to vegetate for weeks and months, mostly in hutments or on the premises of factories, which were more than full up; they did not receive sufficient food. Poles and Russians sorted out those still capable of working. All the rest were collected together in transports and loaded in groups of 60 to 70 persons in goods wagons and despatched to the west on a journey, which mostly lasted more than two weeks.

The situation was similar in Pomerania, where the population was generally driven together in the middle of the villages and sometimes even in the church. From there they went on foot to the next goods-station where either complete transports were formed or single goods-wagons were attached to passenger trains. The assembly camp was from October 1945 the frontier station of Scheune near Stettin. This was the most notorious of all expellee camps, and in autumn 1945 and even still in the spring of 1946 acts of violence, plunderings and such like by individual Poles and members of the militia were a part of the day's programme[390]).

Also in the southern part of East Prussia there were in general the same sudden orders for expulsion, and long misery marches of the expellees to the assembly places and railway stations, examination of baggage, and during the railway journeys plundering by bands of Poles who generally used the long waits of the transport trains at the railway stations for their own purposes; some of these Poles even jumped onto the trains, when they were in motion and caused panic and terror everywhere[391]). There were also many deaths as the transport often lasted several weeks, and was without food and accompanied by the very greatest physical hardships[392]).

As there were in the autumn of 1945 still no inter-Allied decisions, for the expulsions, the Poles tried to give these expulsions the appearance of a "voluntary departure" on the part of the German population. For this purpose each individual expellee was in many places forced to sign a statement, in the Polish language before the departure of the train, to the effect that his departure was voluntary, that he transferred his property to the Polish State, and that he renounced the right to return.

The expulsions decided upon were carried out in the different districts in very different ways, in some cases even whole localities were cleared of their population. In the autumn of 1945, generally speaking, those incapable of working, that is to say aged, sick people and mothers with several children were particularly selected for expulsion.

Those people working for the Russians or, who were indispensable as being "specialists", were in the majority of cases provisionally excepted from expulsion, also when this was against their will. Further, particularly in Upper Silesia and also in a certain degree in East Prussia, those persons were not expelled who, although they were German citizens, felt themselves by reason of their descent and language to be Poles. They were allowed to acquire Polish citizenship and were not affected by the expropriation, the forced labour and other measures applied to the German population.

As the Poles described the East German territories in their official propaganda as being "originally Polish", they naturally attached importance to spreading the opinion that there had been a numerous autochthonous Polish population in East Germany.

For this reason the Poles were not satisfied with a relatively small number of the inhabitants of Uppere Silesia and East Prussia voluntarily choosing Polish citizenship, but they further tried by promises and threats, and also by actual measures of violence, to win over those people in Upper Silesia who spoke a Polish dialect, and the Masurians in East Prussia[393]). Those people in particular who had Polish sounding names were compulsorarily kept back and excluded from expulsion[394]). Some Germans yielded to the persistent pressure and became Polish citizens, many others are at the present time still refusing to do this.

In addition to the systematic expulsions carried out by the Polish authorities there began, from the summer of 1945, the return to the west of those who had been evacuated to East Germany on account of the air raids; most of these received preferential departure cards. They were joined by many native East Germans, who did not desire to remain, by reason of the persecutions, the expropriation, the forced labour and the appalling conditions of life.

As comprehensive forced expulsions were being carried out everywhere, the population of East Germany gradually lost all hope that things would change for the better and that the Potsdam Agreement would be annulled. There, therefore, followed in the autumn of 1945 a voluntary and secret emigration in addition to the official expulsions. This was very dangerous, as the German population as a whole was subject to forced labour. And apart from that, whenever the Poles learned of the intention of Germans to depart, the rage of members of the militia and fanatical Polish civilians was vented upon the Germans; in such cases there were often the most scandalous occurrences.

In the summer of 1946 for instance people were warned, in the rural district of Breslau, by public placards against departing on their own. Numerous Germans, however, succeeded in escaping, by a departure on their own, the chicanery and violence which almost always took place in the course of expulsion by force.

In some places Germans, such as clergymen and administrative employees, who were still in the country and in Polish service, succeeded in taking over the organization of the expulsions. The population in such cases were at least spared in their homes the acts of violence and plunderings, by which the expulsions were generally accompanied. The German organizers alluded to drew up lists and informed everyone in good time. The transfer of property, the declaration of renunciation and all other formalities could be arranged in peace. Further the expellees in question no longer had to wait for weeks at the assembly places, until the transports were ready. Russian soldiers and local headquarters helped in some cases by putting military vehicles at the disposal of the Germans and bringing them to the Oder Neisse frontier; in this way the expellees escaped the chicanery of the Polish expulsion commandos.

The expulsion of the German population or their departure, owing to the intolerable pressure of circumstances and the forced expulsion with certainty to be expected, from East Pomerania, Upper Silesia, the southern part of East Prussia, from Danzig and West Prussia, in the months of October and November, continued on a larger scale in the spring of 1946, and went on without interruptions until the late autumn of 1946.

This was after it had paused, owing to the winter, in December 1945 and in January and February 1946. The year 1946 was the chief period of expulsion in East Germany. All provinces and places under Polish administration, also Lower Silesia and various parts of Pomerania and East Prussia were now systematically included in the expulsion; this was after they had been up to then practically spared this action[395]).

First of all there was little difference between the expulsions of 1946 and those of 1945. The controls at the assembly places continued, and the long weeks of transport were accompanied by plundering and all kinds of excesses. The result was, that the majority of the expellees had been robbed of everything and arrived at the west of the Oder and Neisse in a state of physical collapse and spiritual desperation. After their arrival here in the Soviet zone of occupation, they were kept for months in quarantine and refugee camps[396]).

It was not until the summer of 1946 that there was a certain improvement, in as much as the directions for carrying out the expulsions began to be put into force. As soon as the 17. November 1945 the Allied Control Council had drawn up a "plan for the transfer of the German population ..." [397]). Among other things it was provided in this plan that of the estimated 3.5 million Germans from Poland and the German eastern territories administered by the Poles, 2 millions should be transferred to the Soviet zone and 1.5 millions to the British one, and that this transfer should begin in December 1945 and be ended in July 1946.

Later, on the 14. February 1946 an agreement was arrived at between the British and Polish representatives, viz. within the frame-work of the international Combined Repatriation Executive (C.R.X.)[398]), which again contained the condition, as in the case of the Potsdam Agreement, "that the expulsion and transfer of the Germans must be carried out in a humane and orderly manner". Further the routes and quotas of expellees for the different periods were laid down, and it was agreed, that there would be a guard for the transports and also food and medical attention, during the process of expulsion. It is strange that the expellees were not to have in their possession more than 500 Reichsmarks and not to take more baggage than "they could carry in their hands".

The very severe conditions, limiting the amount of baggage to be taken by the expellees with them, were in general observed by the Poles during the following expulsions of the year 1946[399]). Also there was a certain military protection for the expellees, but the actual purpose of the Anglo-Polish Agreement, viz. "an orderly and humane "carrying out of the expulsions, was during the mass expulsions of the year 1946 by no means attained. There was only in the rarest cases any degree of adequate feeding and medical attention.

What was more important was the fact that the Polish militia commandos sped up the expulsion of the Germans from their homes in an unnecessary degree and generally carried this out with the utmost severity, and indeed sometimes in a brutal way There were often no means of transport for the expellees, when they were driven out of their homes, so that they had to drag themselves with their heavy baggage for kilometres to the assembly camps. When they arrived here there were mostly not the most primitive kinds of quarters for accommodating thousands of people, for it took weeks before the transports had been got ready for starting[400]).

From all that is today known about the course of the expulsions, it is a fact that these expulsions were carried out without the Polish authorities properly organizing them, and that almost always there was neither the intention nor any kind of special preparation for insuring that the transfer of the German population to the west would take place in an "orderly and humane manner".

It was chiefly the representatives of the British Occupation forces who had to be thanked for there being less excesses and less plunderings in 1946. The British authorities frequently protested against the manner in which the Polish authorities carried out the expulsions.

The most important result of the Anglo-Polish Agreement was, that the expellees were from the end of 1946 free to go into the British zone of occupation and, therefore, no longer needed to escape secretly from the Soviet zone of occupation to the west.

Whereas in the year 1945 the expellees were sent exclusively into the Soviet zone, the majority were in the year 1946 sent by direct transports to the British zone of occupation. The transfer of Germans from the territories east of the Oder and Neisse into the British zone continued from spring until the end of 1946, without any kind of interruptions which mattered.

This whole action was known under the military term "Operation Schwalbe" (Operation Swallow). There were altogether 1 375 000 Germans brought from the Oder Neisse territories in transports in the course of this operation to West Germany[401]). Stettin was the chief station in the whole of the northern area of the Oder Neisse territories for organizing the transports of expellees, and for handing them over to British guards. In the neighbourhood of Stettin there were several assembly camps, in which those to be expelled often had to wait for weeks, until the trains departed; in addition to the notorious camp of Stettin-Scheune there were also the camps of Kreckow and Frauendorf[402]).

The expellees from Pomerania and East Brandenburg assembled there and those arriving by train from Danzig or East and West Prussia were in Stettin arranged in separate transports and sent to the west. Some were sent not by rail but by sea from Stettin to Lübeck[403]). In the southern sector of the Oder Neisse territories the railway junction at Kohlfurt, to the north-east of Gorlitz was the centre for the transports of expellees; from here these transports were sent to the Soviet and British zones[404]). There were often protracted and tedious re-arrangements of the transports of expellees at different intermediate stations, in order to avoid the quotas agreed upon between the British and Polish authorities being exceeded. It happened indeed that Germans were brought from Pomerania first to Poland, and then transported from there via Silesia to the west.

In addition to the expulsions into the British zone of occupation, there were in 1946 as also in 1945 hundreds of thousands of Germans transferred to the Soviet zone. Many of these expellees set out on their way to the western zones of occupation, as soon as they were able to escape from the reception camps in the Soviet zone, for, after their cruel experiences at home, they did not want to live any longer under Soviet rule. In 1946 about 250 000 expellees arrived in West Germany without coming in organized transports[405]).

It is true that as early as 1945 the number of compulsorily expelled East Germans and of those who had fled to Central and West Germany, because they could not any longer endure the rule of violence of the Poles and the Russians, amounted to between 600 000 and 700 000 people. This stream of expellees increased in 1946 in a manifold degree. About 2 000 000 Germans came, in the course of this year, across the Oder and Neisse to the west. Thus the Polish endeavours to drive out the East German population had already met with very great success. In addition to the expulsions, the extreme measures of oppression had contributed their part to this. Famine, physical exhaustion during the forced labour, epidemics in the towns, furthermore torturings in the camps and prisons led to such a high mortality among the Germans, that the Polish expulsion commandos were saved work.

By the end of 1946 the majority of the Germans, who had remained in their homes when the Russian troops marched in or had later on returned there, had been in the meantime driven out again or had perished. The towns and villages of Silesia, southern East Prussia, East Pomerania and East Brandenburg had by this time been in a great degree emptied of their German population, and, as a result of the settlement of Poles, looked quite different.

At the beginning of winter 1946—1947, when the cold had caused great losses among the expellees, the British authorities refused to receive further transports, because they considered that they could not be responsible for delivering more hundreds of thousands of half-dead expellees into the reception camps, which were already overfilled. At the same time they wanted to force the Polish authorities to better their methods of expulsion. Various transports, therefore, went back to the places from which they had started[406]), and the expellee action slackened down during the winter of 1946—1947.

As, however, there were still great numbers of Germans east of the Oder and Neisse, there began in the spring of 1947 a new and finally comprehensive stage in the compulsory expulsions. The British authorities, however, were still not prepared to take over the transports, which were, therefore, brought exclusively into Russian occupied territory. These expulsions now began to proceed in a considerably more orderly way than in 1945, and to some extent also in 1946. All the same, however, the appalling conditions still prevailed in the expulsion camps, so that many Germans still paid for the hardships of the expulsions with their lives.

The places which had not been affected or only partially so by the expulsions were now included, in the year 1947, and also many Germans, who had up to then been spared as indispensable workers, had now to depart from their homes. During the whole spring, summer and autumn of 1947 there were in this way about 500 000 Germans transported to the west from Silesia, East Pomerania, West Prussia and the southern part of East Prussia. At the end of 1947 the systematic expulsions, from the territories of East Germany administered by the Poles had, generally speaking, ended. There were, however, later cases of individual expulsion, and also many Germans tried in the following years to get out on their own from Pomerania or Silesia to the west.

The majority of the German citizens, who had remained particularly in Upper Silesia and the southern part of East Prussia, were mostly persons, who by reason of their Polish descent or in order not to lose their means of existence, had voluntarily become Polish citizens. They consisted also of persons, such as the Masurians in East Prussia who were regarded by the Poles as being of Polish descent, that is to say, they were the so-called autochthonous persons. The great majority of these people, however, felt themselves to be Germans and were forced to take Polish citizenship against their will.

In addition to these, there were also individuals kept back, in East Prussia, in Upper and Lower Silesia, in East Pomerania and a few also in East Brandenburg. These were skilled workers and other valuable workers, who were compelled to remain in the country, because they were indispensable.

Contrary to what had happened in the eastern territories administered by the Poles, there had been no expulsions up to the summer of 1947 in that part of East Prussia, which was administered by the Russians. For the Russians had not, like the Poles, any national reasons for expelling the Germans from East Prussia.

By severely controlling the Russo-Polish line of demarcation, which went straight through East Prussia, the Russians on the contrary did all they could to prevent the emigration and flight of Germans from the part of East Prussia, which they administered. They wanted to exploit these Germans as workers to a maximum.

The exhaustion of the German population working on Soviet collective farms, as a result of the standardized quotas of work which must be done, and the appalling conditions of life in the whole "administrative district of Kaliningrad", about which we have already spoken[407]), led to the Germans desiring nothing more eagerly than to leave this land, which had been ruined in an unconceivably short period of time, in which nothing more belonged to them, and into which a continually increasing flood of Russian civilians was pouring. Some of these Germans succeeded in escaping over the frontier into the territory administered by the Poles, and from which they could more easily get to the west. Very many of them, however, were victims of underfeeding and epidemics and died

It was not until the labour of the Germans could be more or less dispensed with, owing to the influx of Russian civilians, that the expulsion of the remaining Germans, of which the number was scarcely more than 100 000, began between 1947 and 1949[408]). As early as the summer of 1947 a few thousand Germans had received permission to emigrate from Königsberg[409]). In the autumn of 1947, but particularly in the year 1948 and further in 1949, both the approximate 20 000 Germans still surviving in Konigsberg and also the rest of the German population in that part of East Prussia administered by the Russians, were put into organized transports for departure. In these cases the Russians did not enforce the condition of individual permissions to depart[410]).

The Russians thus adopted the procedure of the Poles, although there had been no mention in the Potsdam Agreement of expelling Germans from the part of East Prussia administered by the Russians. The fact that this happened at a moment when the conditions of life were beginning to improve, whereas in the previous years many thousands of Germans had wretchedly perished of hunger and diseases, is a clear proof of how little the Russians were influenced by consideration for the Germans, when expelling or not expelling them.

No expulsion of Germans took place on the other side of the river Memel in the territory of the district of Memel, which had in 1945 been incorporated in the Soviet Republic of Lithuania. The Memel Germans, who were still in the country, had to take Lithuanian citizenship and were thereby eliminated from the category of Germans, who had to be resettled. Nevertheless, many Germans secretly made their way to Germany away from the Memel district because of the Soviet oppression there. The majority of the Memel Germans, who in 1944 did not flee or returned later, remained in their homes.

Between 1947 and 1949, when the expulsion of the German population from the northern part of East Prussia was proceeding, there began a wave of systematic expulsions also from the territory of the Polish State. In this way the rooting out of everything German in Poland, which had begun in the years 1945 and 1946, was to be completed. At the time when the brutal persecution of all Germans in Poland had reached its climax, thousands of those, who had not yet been arrested or interned, went on their own from localities in Posen and West Prussia to the west; the local Polish authorities hastened the removal of such Germans[411]).

By the year 1946 almost all Germans in the territory of West Poland were already in prison, in concentration camps or at forced labour; there was, therefore, practically no further possibility for them to leave the country on their own. Solely the Germans, who had come in from the *Reich* during the war and the ethnic German resettlers from the Baltic and South East European states as far as they had not fled, were treated in a different way from the native ethnic Germans in Poland, and were expelled from the country as early as 1945 or 1946.

After 1945 the hatred and the intention to retaliate on the part of the Poles, which had been fomented, while they were suffering occupation themselves, were mainly directed against those Germans whose families had been for many years in Poland, and who had been Polish citizens between 1919 and 1939, and then during the German occupation of Poland had been treated with preference, because they were Germans. They were not only regarded as Germans, who were to be expelled according to the Agreement of Potsdam, but also, as we have already stated, punished as collaborators, and "traitors to the nation".

According to the new Polish legislation, criminal proceedings were accordingly taken against them. It was not until they had been in prison and persecuted for years, many of them having perished, and the rest being in a state of misery and exhaustion from forced labour, that the first of them began to be discharged in 1947 from the camps. Most of those discharged were also expelled.

According to Article 4 of the decree of the 13. September 1946 concerning "the elimination of persons of German nationality from the Polish community"[412]), such persons as had up to then been in prisons and camps were to be expelled, so far as they had shown their German feelings and as they confessed to being German.

As the Poles, however, had in the meantime got to appreciate the cheap work of the Germans, the execution of this stipulation was very much delayed, and first of all only applied to Germans who could not work. These were the first to be discharged from the camps in the years 1947 and 1948 and were transported to the Russian zone of occupation[413]). As those capable of working were kept back, these expulsions very often led to the breaking up of families and to the separation of mothers and children. It was not until the summer of 1949 that a great number of those capable of working were affected and the discharges, the closing down of whole camps and the transports of expellees reached their peak, until they were mostly ended in the year 1950.

Those to be discharged were removed from their places of work, which were distributed all over the country, and brought to the central camps which were competent for them. There the discharges were carried out and the transport got together. In particular from the camp of Potulice near Bromberg and from the camp of Sikawa near Lodz numbers of transports, each containing on an average 2000 Germans, were sent away in 1949 to Germany.

After their long years of hard suffering, almost all Germans felt the expulsion from Poland to be a release. The feeling of thanks and joy at having survived the past hardships and inhuman conditions of life and being at last liberated from them, caused these people to forget for a moment the hard lot of being compulsorily expelled from the home, in which their ancestors had lived for generations.

In the course of the expulsions between 1947 and 1949 it became evident, that the Polish authorities were not interested to the same extent as before in expelling the Germans. The settlement of Poles in the East German towns and villages made very little progress and it became clear, that the previous productivity of the eastern territories of Germany and the number of the population would never be the same again, after the expulsion of the Germans.

Consequently it became more and more clear that, if the complete expulsion of the Germans in the country were to be continued, this would cause economic damage to Poland This, however, must be avoided, as, according to the increasing sovietization of all branches of life in Poland just as in the other Bolshevist states, production must be increased and the fulfilment of the economic plans had become the chief political commandment.

Therefore, the Poles tried, after the last comprehensive expulsion of 1949, to prevent Germans from being expelled. This was done in order to prevent a further decrease in the numbers of those capable of working in Poland, and thus to avoid a concomitant diminution in the economic capacity of Poland. The Polish chauvinism, which had been the original cause of the expulsion of all Germans, was indeed far from having died out, but it was beginning to take a back place, owing to the economic principles of the Communist government in Warsaw.

As a result of the expulsions being stopped many families were torn asunder by violence. Many women had to remain in Poland or East Germany although their husbands, who had been prisoners of war, returned to Central and West Germany. Also many Germans, even children, were now kept back as important workers in Poland and the eastern territories of Germany under Polish administration, and this was done although their nearest relatives had long since been expelled.

In order to put an end to this state of affairs, the British authorities in collaboration with the German Red Cross began the so-called "Link action"[114]), the purpose of which was to bring the separated families together again. As a result of this action, which continued from March 1950 to the end of 1951, almost 44 000 Germans came acrose the Oder and Neisse to West Germany[115]). The Polish authorities, however, did not keep to the arrangement, as they in most cases did not expel the separated persons claimed by their relatives in West Germany, but sick and aged Germans and such as were for other reasons incapable of working, and whom they were not at all anxious to keep in the eastern territories administered by the Poles.

Since the termination of the "Link action" there have only been quite isolated cases of Germans coming to West Germany or even to the Soviet zone by crossing the Oder and Neisse. Thus the expulsion of Germans from the eastern districts administered by the Poles and from Poland seems to have ended.

The following statistics show the different stages of the expulsions according to the numbers of people involved.

The different stages of the expulsions.

	Number of the expellees:
Before the Potsdam Agreement (June to July 1945) particularly out of East Brandenburg, East Pomerania and Lower Silesia:	250 000
From late in summer until late in autumn 1945 from all east German territories with the exception of that part of East Prussia administered by the Russians:	400 000
During the year 1946 particularly out of Silesia, East Pomerania and the part of East Prussia administered by the Poles:	2 000 000
During the year 1947 from all the territories of East Germany administered by the Poles and from that part of East Prussia administered by the Russians:	500 000
During the year 1948 from the part of East Prussia administered by the Russians and from Poland:	150 000
During the year 1949 from that part of East Prussia administered by the Russians and from Poland:	150 000
During the years 1950/1951 in accordance with the "Link action":	50 000
Total	3 500 000

With the last big transports of expellees from Poland and the territories administered by the Poles the expulsion of the Germans had stopped after 1950/51. But hundreds of thousands of Germans had in the meanwhile perished as a result of the appalling conditions under which they had to live in 1945 and 1946. From the German nationals living in the *Reich* territories east of the Oder Neisse at the end of the war and from the ethnic Germans having lived in Danzig and Poland approximately still one million were finally left behind[416]).

A small part of these people had voluntarily taken Polish citizenship, because they were Poles by descent or spoke Polish. After the conclusion of the expulsions the policy of "compulsory option" was followed out in a severer form, the purpose being to incorporate in the Polish State those Germans who were still there[417]).

The decree of the Polish government of the 28. April 1946 was kept to. This decree stipulated, that Polish citizenship could only be acquired by such German citizens, who could prove their Polish descent and who had made a "declaration of loyalty" to the Polish people and state[418]). As there were only a very few German citizens in Poland who felt themselves to be Poles and took the opportunity of acquiring Polish citizenship, the Polish authorities in many places claimed as autochthonous Poles all those who had Polish sounding names, had some knowledge of Polish, and for other questionable reasons. On these people they tried to force Polish citizenship. Later the Polish authorities ceased these desperate attempts to declare as Poles a considerable number of the Germans still living in their own homes.

The decree of the 8. January 1951 ordered that all persons, who were previously German citizens and were still in East Germany, had the right to Polish citizenship, whether they were of German or Polish descent, or whether they spoke Polish or German[419]). By reason of this order the pressure put upon the Germans to choose Polish citizenship was increased, in all the territories of Germany administered by the Poles It is at present hardly possible to say how many Germans have in the meanwhile yielded to this pressure. It is, however, sure that many of them are still refusing Polish citizenship, for fear that they would thus finally lose all chances of escaping from a state which is ideologically and nationally foreign to them, and that they would also forego their claim to be reunited with their relatives living in Central and West Germany.

About 204 000 Germans from Poland and the districts of East Germany, who had applied for repatriation to Germany, were registered by the German Red Cross. The Polish government could not stop the evacuation movement by stopping the discrimination against Germans and permitting today regular German church services in some localities of Silesia and Pomerania, and the re-establishment of German schools. All this aimed undoubtedly at getting the Germans to remain, and take Polish citizenship.

From all this it is clear, how very different the situation had become in comparison with that of 1945. At that time the Poles wanted to drive the Germans out as quickly as possible, today they are compelled to try and get the Germans to become Polish citizens, either by threats or by concessions

The leaders of the Polish State are making it clear by their measures, that for whatever reasons they no longer approve a rigorous policy of expulsion, and it is becoming very clear, that the expulsion of the east German population was in every respect a political mistake.

It brought unspeakable suffering and shocking losses over a whole people, and burdened a whole nation, indeed all Europe and the western world with almost the unsolvable problem of the expellees. Finally it damaged the Polish people more than it profited them.

The problem of the expellees has, therefore, long ceased to be merely a German one; it has become a matter, which is endangering the political and social order and safety of the whole western world. It is beyond the scope of our present treatise even to outline the results of the expellee problem. We must limit ourselves to telling the story of the great catastrophe of East Germany, and we shall do this simply, and well aware of how incomplete our attempt must be. What our report lacks in vividness and directness must be made good by the words of those, who were themselves the victims of the great calamity and injustice.

II. The losses of the German civil population to the east of the Oder and Neisse in the course of the expulsions

A report on the course of the expulsions from the east would be incomplete, if an attempt were not made to state, what were the losses of life and to give figures, by which is definitely confirmed, what is stated in the reports of persons concerning the inhuman methods of the expulsion. In this connection it must be emphasized, that neither at the present time nor ever will it be possible to give full and exact facts supported by statistical details.

As the losses involved by the expulsions have not been registered anywhere, it is only possible today to calculate them subsequently by indirect means. This can to a certain extent be done by taking the difference between the number of Germans living to the east of the Oder prior to the expulsions[420]) and the number of those, who were registered as expellees in the Federal Republic and the Soviet Zone, or who are still living today in their homes[421]).

Losses of the East German population through the war and as a result of the expulsions (1939—1950).

Reich territories east of the Oder and Neisse	Population of 1939 plus increase of same during the war[422])	Number of expellees from the *Reich* territory east of the Oder and Neisse in the Federal Republic and the Soviet Zone[423])	Number of expellees still in their homes[424])	Difference (Losses through war or expulsion)
East Prussia	2 619 000	1 930 000	75 000	614 000
East Pomerania	1 985 000	1 495 000	50 000	440 000
East Brandenburg	659 000	410 000	10 000	239 000
Silesia	4 824 000	3 250 000	700 000	874 000
Total	10 087 000	7 085 000	835 000	2 167 000

The foregoing statistics show that the German population in the *Reich* territory east of the Oder and Neisse (within the frontiers of 1937) had suffered a total loss of 2.15 million people, owing to the war and the expulsions. As the number of east German soldiers who were killed, or died as prisoners of war certainly did not amount to more than half a million[425]). and, further, as the number of civilians in East Germany, who were killed during air raids before the beginning of the flight and expulsions, would not be likely to be more than 50 000[426]), it follows that, alone during the total process of the expulsions, 1.6 million Germans from the *Reich* territories east of the Oder and Neisse perished[427]), that is to say 15.8 % of the total population of East Germany before the end of the war.

The severity of these losses is evident from the fact, that they are three times as high as those which the east German soldiers suffered in the war. It also has become clear, that the losses of the Germans under Russo-Polish government were on an average more than three-fold of all those who perished in the course of the flight.

The indiscriminiate shootings, when the Red Army marched in, the putting of great numbers of the East German population into forced labour camps and prisons, the general famine and the numbers of epidemics in the years 1945 and 1946, finally also the happenings during the deportations to Russia, and the compulsory expulsions took a far greater number of German lives than did other events that happened during the flight, as for example the crossing of the *Haff*, the bombing of Dresden, and the sinking of numerous ships. That means that the ratio of losses among those who had remained in their homes after 1945 was certainly higher than the average number of 15% indicates. The losses of the German population in the territory of the Free City of Danzig and in Poland were still higher than in the *Reich* territories east of the Oder and Neisse. According to the census of the 10. October 1941 there were 404 000 Germans living in Danzig. In 1950 there were 300 000 expellees from Danzig registered in the Federal Republic, in Berlin and the Soviet zone. As only a few Germans are still living in Danzig, it, therefore, follows that there must have been a total loss of about 100 000 Danzigers, that is to say 25 % of the population[428]).

As regards the Germans who were living in Poland in 1944 (within the frontiers of 1937), it is only possible at present to ascertain the losses of the Germans of ethnic descent whose families had been living there for generations[429]). The following is the picture:

Losses of the German population in Poland 1939—1950

Germans, who had been in Poland for generations (Frontiers of 1937) according to status of 1939. (430)	Of those registered by 1950 in the Federal Republic in the Soviet Zone and in Berlin	Still in Poland	Difference (= Losses)
958 000	666 000	75 000	217 000 [22.5 %] [431])

Similar to the fate of the ethnic Germans in Poland is that of the German resettlers, who were settled during the war in West Poland, and also of those Germans, who had come from the *Reich* (altogether about 800 000). These will also have suffered similarly high losses. All in all we must reckon that at least 400 000 Germans from Danzig and the Polish territories (frontiers of 1937) did not survive the long process of being driven out beginning with the flight from the Red Army and ending with the official expulsions.

The shockingly high losses among the German population in Poland and in Danzig are explained by the fact, that the overwhelming majority of these people were in 1945 put into camps. These camps had an extraordinarily high mortality, which was due to ill-treatment, acts of violence, bad food, absolutely unhygienic conditions and numerous forms of diseases and epidemics.

The total number of the German civilians, who perished east of the Oder and Neisse as a result of the expulsion, rises to about 2 million if one adds the high losses of the Germans from Poland and Danzig[432]). This means that in the course of the expulsions about a sixth of the German population of the territory east of the Oder and Neisse perished.

DOCUMENTS

THE EXPULSION
OF THE GERMAN POPULATION
FROM THE TERRITORIES
EAST OF THE ODER-NEISSE-LINE

First Section

THE FLIGHT FROM THE RED ARMY

No. 8

Eyewitness report of the medical student Josefine Schleiter of Osterode in East Prussia.
Attested copy, 20. November 1951, 20 pages.
Printed in part.

Experiences on the flight and among the advancing Russians in the area of Osterode

We continued on our way to Elbing for hours through the white snow which kept getting deeper. We were plastered all over with snow and had cold feet, and with our numbed fingers we had to spread the bread which was eaten with the cold milk which we had brought in a can. We spent the night on a farm. The people of the farm were on the flight, and strangers had found quarters there for a few hours. In the rooms there was straw and we slept on it for a few hours. The kitchen was crowded out. All the women wanted to cook on one stove and it was a long time before we also could make our soup.

The next morning we went further. The roads were full of refugees, of carts and people on foot. Now and then motor cars full of people and baggage drove past us and were followed by the envious looks of those walking. There were continual stoppages. Then there was a cry "The Russians are in the neigtbourshood" and all of us were seized with panic. We looked at one another. "That can't be possible". Suddenly a man arrived on horseback and shouted in a loud voice: „Everyone for himself. The Russians will be here in half an hour". A paralyzing fear came over us.

Suddenly the panzer shot over us. The little town of Preussisch Holland before us was being bombarded. We lay down on the earth near a thick tree, and the projectiles flew over us. There was an awful explosion at every impact. I felt that I was at the end of my life. An indescribable peace came over me. I was lying on the ground and next to me was a young girl who pressed anxiously to me. We had no more hope. When the projectiles came, one involuntarily held one's face in one's hands as if to save one's life by saving one's head.

Suddenly the shooting stopped, the panzer rolled up and on all sides there were Russian soldiers in snowshirts. The confusion was so great that one at first did not know whether they were German or Russian soldiers, but then we saw German soldiers with their hands up. They had come from a hospital train and were standing before the Russian soldiers. They were collected together and led away.

The panzer rushed through the rows of carts. Carts were hurled into the ditches where there were entrails of horses, and men, women and children were fighting with death. Wounded people were screaming for help. Next to me was a woman bandaging her husband who was losing blood from a big wound.

Behind me a young girl said to her father: "Father shoot me", "Yes father" said her brother who was about sixteen years old, "I have no more chance".

The father looked at his children, the tears streaming down his cheeks and he said in a quiet tone: "Wait still a little while children".

Then came an officer on horseback. Some German soldiers were brought to him. He took his revolver; I shut my eyes, shots fell, and the poor fellows lay in front of us shot in the head, an expression of horror on their faces The corpses remained there, no one dared to touch them

The panzer kept rolling up with soldiers That is the Russian Army, which, as we were told, was nearly famished to death and in rags. These strong and strapping fellows, and gun-women in the full bloom of health were sitting next to the soldiers, all in new uniforms, and with felt boots and fur caps. We stood on the edge of the road looking at the panzer rolling past and at the soldiers. Most of them had primitive faces, round heads and expressions of unbounded joy. They waved to us and shouted out: "Hitler kaputt". Some of them jumped off the panzer, when they moved more slowly, and came towards us: "Urr, Urr", they shouted hoarsely, and for the first time in my life I heard the Russian language which sounds hoarse and not pleasant to our ears. In a second, numbers of people had been relieved of their watches and rings. One Russian soldier tore the beautiful fur glovers from the hands of Mr. N. and threw him his own woollen ones, which were wet through and through. There was then a search for arms. It was some hours, before the Russians had passed by. We also saw the repulsive faces of political functionaries. One could not help thinking of the Communist Secret Police.

It was already getting dark and we thought over what we should do. We were helpless on the road and no one worried about us. The Poles, who had worked on the farms as labourers and were on the flight with us, quickly became friends with the Russian soldiers, because they could understand one another, and said to us: "Go home, eat and drink. The Russian is good, nothing will happen to you". The road echoed with the passing panzer. We went further with our carts. The Frenchmen had left us. They collected together and thought they would be at once discharged and sent home. "What are we to do", we asked ourselves. We decided to go by a bye-way to the next farm house. This was, however, full of Poles and we went to the nearby house of a farm labourer. It was barricaded, and we had to break the door open with a hatchet which we had found in the barn. There were two pigs there in front of empty troughs. Fowls were on the perches, but there was no food to be seen. We made a fire in the kitchen, ate a little and sat the whole night on the chairs in terror. We did not dare to move. We were in a state of utter despair and thought of the future with horror.

The next morning we found the other rooms and a furnished bedroom with a stove. We made a fire, and a young man fetched milk from the farm. The warmth, thank God, made us feel better. Then steps were heard, the blood froze in our veins, and this I could see in the faces of the others. Several officers and soldiers came in. One of them could speak some German, again they shouted: "Hitler kaputt. We are going to Berlin". They brought meat which I was to cook. They found preserved meat and fruit. This seemed to be something new to them. They opened the jars and made signs, that I should taste it, only then they ate themselves. When I had cooked the meat, they ate it with bread, the bones were thrown on the table or on the ground, then they drank from the vodka they had brought with them, smoked and tried to talk to us. Time and again groups of soldiers and officers came in, who warmed themselves and ate the meat and bread they had brought with them.

In the night we had lain down on the beds. There were again steps, an officer came in, flashed an electric torch in our faces and asked: "Germanski?" We answered in the affirmative Thank God he left the room again. We lay in silence on the beds and waited for the dawn to come. Mr. N. was quite broken-hearted and kept saying: "Where can my wife be with the children?"

We remained here four days. The third night five officers came with revolvers and said: "Get out, we are going to sleep here". Where were we to go? In the next room sixteen Frenchmen had taken up their quarters. We went to them and asked if we could remain the rest of the night there. They agreed, and we sat the whole night freezing there. The following afternoon I had prepared potatoes for the evening and was frying them in the pan, when some drunken young officers came into the room. One of them could speak some German and said: "Your lives are in danger. Run away at once". We put our coats on and went into the yard, where our carts were standing. In the morning everything had still been in the carts. But by now both carts had been plundered. Linen, victuals and trunks had disappeared, there were bits of linen lying torn to pieces on the ground. The horses were quickly harnessed, but the Russians continued to stand near us with their machine-pistols, and observed us threateningly. I had a kind of feeling, that they would let us finish preparing to move away from the farm, and that, when we were about to do so, they would shoot us, but that did not happen, for they let us go away. We set out on our way, in order to go again to the farm of Mr. N. On the way we walked on both sides of the carts, in order to relieve the horses. Occasionally Russian motor cars drove past us.

Suddenly a motor car stopped and three very tall fellows surrounded and seized hold of me, and threw me into their car. My cries could not be heard in the snow-storm. The car started off and I was standing in it, being gazed at by one of the Russians. I was ice-cold. Since midday I had been without food and had nothing but what was on my body. One of the fellows, who was covered up in rugs, grinned at me and asked cynically: "Cold?" The car slowed down and I sprang out, it stopped immediately and I was again thrown back. There then followed the most dishonouring moments of my life which I cannot describe. The car stopped again suddenly. I jumped out and driven by a terrible fear ran as quickly as I could into the winter darkness. It must have been about ten o'clock, and no house was to be seen anywhere. Under my feet was deep snow, I had military boots on, which one of the Frenchmen had given me as my own were wet through and through. The hard leather, however, pressed into my muscles. I ran without stopping until I came to a little bridge. Here I took refuge and would have liked best to lie down in the snow, in order not to wake up again. What will now happen I thought? If a Russian finds me here that will be the end, or if I come into the headlights of a car I shall be carried off. All over my body I was ice-cold, for I was standing up to my calves in soft snow. God help me was all that I could say and the stars twinkled peacefully in the sky. Why do you torment yourself, you have got to bear the fate which is yours? Then I heard carts and people passing quietly by. Thank God they were also refugees on their way to Osterode. They still had all their property in the carts; I joined them and we proceeded for about another 8 to 10 kilometres. We came to a big farm. Here we were stopped by Russians, who had seized the farm. We were searched and told that we would not be able to proceed on our way before the next morning.

We were brought into the big cow-shed. The cows were running about outside in the snow. There were more than a hundred people here. People were sitting on the stone-troughs. Some of the men had fetched wood and were making a little fire. If one stood near it one could warm one's self a little. Terrible hours followed, particularly for the women. From time to time soldiers came in, also officers, and fetched girls and young women. No shrieking, no begging, nothing helped. With revolvers in their hands they gripped the women round their wrists and dragged them away. A father who wanted to protect his daughter, was brought out into the yard and shot. The girl was all the more the prey of these wild creatures. Towards morning she came back, terror in her child-like eyes, she had become years older during the night. She sank down into the straw, because her body was no longer capable of giving expression to her feelings. We were all overcome by sadness and desperation. We waited. No more soldiers came, thank God. Around the farm soldiers were standing with the familiar fur caps on their heads and their machine-pistols at their belts.

The next morning all carts were searched for arms. Women and children could pass through. I joined a group and passed alright through the control. The highway was full of refugees. We went on foot beside the carts. The ditches were full up with oats which had been thrown into them, with beds, linen and bits of clothing. People had thrown their things away, in order to make their carts lighter, so that they could move more quickly forwards, for all of them had taken too much with them. They had taken with them household untensils, victuals, beds, clothing, as they had thought they would be able to live somewhere as evacuees in the *Reich,* until the war was over. But things had turned out otherwise. Very valuable things were strewn about here and must get ruined in the wet. One continually saw the corpses of German soldiers, men, women and children which, however, had now been brought into the fields and at least covered up. Shudder after shudder crept down our backs. If only I had poison, said one man, I would poison myself and the whole family. I could not endure my wife and my daughter falling victims to these horrible men. In the evening we came to a farm, where we wanted to stay the night.

Here some Frenchmen had already taken up their quarters and were just slaughtering a pig. The owner of the house lay in the yard shot. The moon was shining on his face, which was full of terror. His eyes were wide open and his mouth was contorted into a kind of grimace. His wife came to us and begged us not to betray her as she was in fear. We went into a big room and fetched straw and pushed it into the broken windows. We chopped up wood and made a fire. The room became slowly full, and men, women and children made themselves beds of straw. Coffee was made in the kitchen, and soon everything was still, as everyone was eating his supper. They were mostly farmers, who had large stocks of bread, butter and meat.

I had to look for a place after I had bandaged a sick person who had been brought in. She had a wound as big as a fist in her back, and was also wounded in the leg and in the arms. She had been severely hit during the shooting. An emergency bandage was put on the wounds which looked frightful and spread an awful smell. I had sat down on a washing bag. Since the previous midday I had had nothing to eat. I wondered if anyone would have pity on me. None of those smacking their jaws thought that there was perhaps someone who had nothing. It is terrible to have to beg for a piece of bread. The mother of the wounded girl, to whom I first applied, refused, saying that they were a large family and themselves hadn't got much. At last a young country woman gave me a slice of bread with dripping, which I hungrily devoured. In the kitchen the Frenchmen gave me even a cup of milk and peeled potatoes. On the next day I went to a farm which was quite near. Here I was destined to remain some weeks The young farmer's wife was very kind and put me up as her guest.

There follows a detailed description of the experiences of the authoress in Osterode until September 1945.

No. 20

Eyewitness report of the High School
Graduate M. M. of Lyck in East Prussia
Original. 9. November 1951.

Flight over the Haff to the west of the Reich

On the 21. January 1945 Lyck had to be evacuated. My mother, my sister and I took a sad farewell from my father, who had been called up to the *Volkssturm,* and also from my grandparents. My grandfather intended to take as much as possible of our movable goods with him and set off with his trek in the direction of Arys.

We reached Rastenburg with one of the last trains and spent the night there with relatives. The broadcasting reports which we heard made it clear, that East Prussia was in a hopeless situation. Meanwhile there came the fateful news, that no more trains were running to the *Reich.* Now, our one thought was to leave Rastenburg as quickly as possible. My grandmother remained behind with her maid-servant, as she was absolutely determined to wait for her husband. We were never to see her or my grandfather again.

At the goods-station at Rastenburg we found refuge in a covered box car of a train, which was taking soldiers in the direction of Konigsberg. In Korschen we had to get out but had the luck of catching another goods train, which was overcrowded with refugees. Infants died of hunger on the way.

On the 26 January 1945 we reached Bartenstein. In their fear of falling into the hands of the advancing Russians numerous refugees, in spite of the bitter cold, had gone so far as to get into open goods-wagons of the transport. When we reached Bartenstein many of them were already frozen to death.

We remained the night in our wagon. At dawn we left the goods-train and looked for quarters in Bartenstein. A lady of Lyck, whom we knew, joined us with her son. He had been overtaken by the flight during his sickleave. The cold had reached a temperature of 25^0 centigrade below zero. While we were on our way we heard the dull rumbling of artillery in the distance.

We found quarters and rested two days. Then the artillery fire, which was getting nearer, forced us to leave the town of Bartenstein. During the ceaseless explosions of the army installations, which were being blown up by our own troops, we made our way in the midst of a wave of desperate refugees out of the town. We soon saw that it would be impossible to get ahead on the highways. We, therefore, returned to the goods-station and again had the enormous luck of finding a wagon which was only moderately full. Our acquaintance got hold of some railweymen, who, after a lot of talking to, coupled our wagon onto a hospital train which was going in the direction of Braunsberg. The railwaymen looked after the refugees in a touching manner and brought us food and drink.

On the 1. February 1945 we reached Braunsberg. Here we heard the latest bad news: Allenstein fallen. Elbing occupied by the Russians. We were in a huge pocket.

Russian aeroplanes plastered the town of Braunsberg incessantly with bombs and machine-gun fire. A friend of my mother's took us into her house. Many refugees had to stay in cellars. We remained in Braunsberg until the 10. February 1945. Every day we had to queue up for hours waiting for food and coal. The rumbling of the multiple Stalin rocket-guns got nearer every day. There was no more light and gas. Ten of us were living in one room. We decided to leave the town. With a few other companions in misery we quitted our abode and groped through a pitch-dark night along a highway covered with corpses, and carcasses of animals. Behind us was Braunsberg in flames, to the left of us there was raging a violent battle for Frauenburg. At about midnight, entirely covered in dirt and mud, we reached the little town of Passarge on the *Frisches Haff*. We awaited the dawn in a barn. Heinz P., the soldier on sick-leave, and his mother were unable to walk further. We had to leave them behind, when we continued our way on foot to the *Frisches Haff*. In the meanwhile the bitter cold had changed to continuous rain. We reached the shore of the *Frisches Haff*, took a breathing space of a few minutes and then proceeded on our march to the *Nehrung* on the other side.

The ice was breaking and at some places we had to drag ourselves with pains through water 25 centimetres deep. We continually tried the surface with sticks. Bomb-craters compelled us to make detours. We often slipped and thought we were already lost. With our clothes wet through and through movement was difficult. But deadly fear drove us on in spite of our shivering bodies.

I saw women do superhuman things. As leaders of treks they instinctively found the safest way for their carts. House utensils were lying scattered all over the ice, wounded people crept up to us with imploring gestures, dragged themselves along on sticks and were pushed forward by friends on little sledges.

Six hours long we passed through this valley of death. Then tired to death we reached the *Frische Nehrung*. We lay down in a small fowlpen and slept for a short while. Our stomachs rumbled with hunger. On the next day we proceeded further in the direction of Danzig. On the way we witnessed shocking scenes. Demented mothers threw their children into the sea, people hanged themselves; others fell upon dead horses, cut flesh out of them and fried the pieces over open fires; women gave birth to children in carts. Everyone thought only of himself; no one was able to help the sick and the weak.

In Kahlberg we put ourselves at the disposal of the Red Cross and looked after wounded people in the hall on the strand. On the 13. February 1945 we went on board a hospital ship, as nursing personnel. The next day we reached Danzig-Neufahrwasser and left the ship.

On the 15. February 1945 we were allotted quarters in Zoppot. My mother, sister and myself were hardly able to stand up on our feet. Nevertheless, we dragged ourselves to the goods-station in Gotenhafen and here for the third time we had a miraculous piece of Luck and were taken in an army-post goods waggon to Stolp in Pomerania. On the 19. February 1945 we came as nursing personnel with a hospital train by way of Hannover to Gera in Thuringia, and here we stayed with relatives. This was the 28. February 1945 and on this day our flight from East Prussia ended.

No. 23

Eyewitness report of Lore Ehrich, the wife of a civil servant of Sensburg in East Prussia

Extract by the authoress from a report written between 1946 and 1947.

Flight over the Haff to Danzig and by ship to Copenhagen

At the beginning of the year 1945 all our private pleasures and sufferings merged with the anxiety about our near future and that of East Prussia; for the Russian attack, which was in autumn brought once more to a standstill near Goldap, had now recommenced. All that still interested us in the wireless were the reports of the Armed Forces; there was no more peace and quiet in our little town either. If in the past refugees and some units of the Armed Forces, and particularly many horses had passed through, there began now at one stroke the largest and most miserable flight of refugees, which there has perhaps ever been in the history of the world. Day and night the trains were running, and day and night the wheels of the treks were running without ceasing towards the west.

It was sad and touching to an extreme degree to see the sorry farm carts, out of which the muffled heads of children peeped in curiosity. The pots and cans tied to them clappered loudly. Often a sheep or cow followed behind. These were mostly the carts, which were on their way from Russia or the Eastern States. Later came the East Prussian treks. Their carts were often stronger and better fitted out, that is to say the people were sitting warm in feather-beds instead of on straw, and the sides of the carts were often closed up by boards. On the top there was a roof; in some cases everything was hung over with carpet strips and patchwork covers, or the whole was built up not with wood but with corrugated iron. In some treks there were even motor-car wheels and rubber tires.

Then the whole Armed Forces began to withdraw from Poland to the west. They also passed by for days and weeks on end. It was a striking feature, that most of the units which had before been mechanized, as for instance the anti-aircraft, now proceeded on horse-drawn carts or on foot. The columns often remained at a halt for hours, because the roads were blocked. Then we went out with hot coffee, or soldiers and refugees came to us taking turns and trying to get warm and to cook something. We never could get the tormenting question out of our minds, as to when it would be our turn.

Of course we had for a long time been thinking over our departure, but no evacuation coupons had been issued, and without these we should receive no coal or potatoes in other places. Furthermore, everyone was severely punished who openly spoke of an imminent Russian danger.

Now at the end of January 1945 it seemed practically impossible to get away by train. Most of the trains only came as far as the next big junction and then had to turn back. As there, however, had still been no order to evacuate our town, and only women in the advanced stages of pregnancy were brought away by lorries, we tried to get away with military vehicles. But this was also too late, for in the meanwhile the inhabitants of three neighbouring urban districts (Johannisburg, Lötzen and Lyck) were crowded together in our little town and were brought out by the 26. January. We were then ordered to the office of the *Landrat* and of the Surveyor of Taxes. The Russian artillery could already be heard in the distance. Mothers with small children and aged people were to have preference. We waited a day and a night in vain. All that we saw was a ridiculously small red motor-car of the Fire Brigade, and this was literally stormed by the people.

Then most of the people preferred to go to the highway and try their luck alone. As it was icy-cold and there was a continual snow-storm, it seemed to me that this would be a too dangerous untertaking for the children and my parents. It was a sad picture in the big hall of the *Landrat's* office. Aged people, sick people, lame people, and children were waiting around, and desperate mothers tried to pacify their crying babies. The Russian artillery could be heard from time to time more and less distinctly. The members of the Party, the *Landrat*, the Party Organization for Women, and the government authorities had long since gone away, but we were still there sitting and waiting for the promised transport. There was only a single member of the Party still on the spot, who stood, and tried to save himself from the storm of questions by shouting at the people in a most disgraceful way.

We had before been told that premature evacuations would lead only to a panic among the population, and that the Party would of course adopt all the necessary measures, at the right moment. Now all these conceited apostles of calumny suddenly announced with the utmost coolness, that everyone should do what he thought to be right. Thus still during the night the majority went on foot to the snowed-in higway, most of them by way of the light railway station in the direction of Rossel.

In the place of members of the Party, soldiers had moved into the official buildings. They prepared to dig in their guns in the *Landrat's* park. Most of them had drunk too much brandy. In a state, therefore, of rosy optimism they were convinced that they would be able to hold our town. During the night of the 27. January we went back home resigned to our fate. Meanwhile a detachment of *Volkssturm* had made themselves comfortable there, they departed, however, again the next morning.

We learned that the Russians had in the night made an attack upon the town, which had been beaten off. Meanwhile there was neither light, gas nor water. The streets were dead and only dogs without their masters were barking to be let into the houses. When the window-panes were shattered and the bullets whistled nearer and nearer my father, who was 74 years old, had a fit of shrieking. Making up our minds in lightning speed we prepared the children, we took our rucksacks and handbags and in spite of all ran to the highway, while the Sunday meal continued to boil merrily on the stove. Two soldiers, who were carrying a wounded man met us and reported, that the Russians were coming from all sides and were already shooting from the gas-works. It was impossible to pass along the roads to Mertinsdorf, Lötzen, Rössel and Rastenburg. The only possibility was to walk along the embankment, and from there to use a field road 3 kilometres long to an old farm house. Panting we dragged the perambulators through the deep snow, we were in a state of utter desperation and could not help thinking that this Sunday, the 28. January, would be the deathday of all of us.

We reached the farm-house with difficulty. The staff of an artillery regiment had taken up its quarters there, and from this spot the battle for Sensburg was directed. An elderly lieutenant of the reserve received us kindly, and asked us to remain for the present with the regiment, as the misery of the refugees was great and many treks were falling into the hands of the Russians.

At 17 o'clock Sensburg had been taken by the Russians, and there now began for us, at a distance of only three kilometres from the main fighting line, the life of migrants and soldiers, which was something quite new to us. We often were able to rest in farm-houses. But nearly always only for a few hours, instead of two to three days as promised. This showed that the Russians were coming close behing us. My parents had to do the journeys on open sleighs, whereas I and the children were put into the so-called forge-cart, which was the only kind of closed one which the supply service had. This was a green painted wooden cart without windows, and which could only be opened from outside by a sliding door. Here the farriers kept their tools. The walls inside were full of kit-bags, briefcases and our rucksacks. The free space in the middle, which was naturally much too small for three persons, served us during the next ten days as dining-room, parlour and bedroom.

The column often halted at night for hours in the woods or on the main roads. I could see nothing in my dark prison, but soon I became an expert, in inferring from bits of talk and sounds which I heard, whether the roads were only blocked, whether we were halting because of bombing or of low-flying attacks or whether, as was often the case, we were already surrounded by the Russians in a pocket and had to be liberated by our panzer.

The soldiers who took part in these retreats were for months being exhausted by endless forced marches; they never were able to take their clothes off, and the best chance of rest they had at nights was in a barn.

The attacks by low-flying planes and the bombings we had to suffer were frequent. The only thought which eventually was prevailing in our minds was the prospect of finding quarters. The food, however, was good and abundant, and the children liked the wandering life, for they lay in feather-beds, and the soldiers were very kind to them.

Alone my father was not able to endure the journeys on open sleighs, because of the cold. As early as the 2. February we had to leave him at Wernergitten in a village inn, which was full of wounded and refugees. He could no longer stand up. My mother immediately decided to remain with him. It was one and a half years before I learned, that my father had lived another nine days, and then been put by the Russians in a mass grave, and that my mother found refuge after his death with strangers in the same village. After a year she succeeded in joining a transport, which was proceeding to Salzwedel in the Altmark. I and the children remained with the staff company, which first of all proceeded by way of Heilsberg; here there were very severe attacks by low-flyers, over the Heilsberg run-way. We always had to go by bad bye-ways, which were very mushy because of the thawing weather, and without casualties we reached Raunau, a village between Mehlsack and Heilsberg. Here we were informed, that the division would shortly be going into action, and that it would, therefore, be advisable for us to join the refugee columns. A lorry of a neighbouring mechanized division brought us to Mehlsack.

The town had just been through a severe bombing, and most of the inhabitants, who were still there, had fled into the country. Up to then the friendly treatment and the good feeding we had had with the army, and also the feeling of being protected, which we had in spite of all failures, had been the solace for many things. We were now to feel fully the typical misery of refugees. The railway station was closed. and we were told, that no more trains were running. It was a fairly long way to the town and in addition the night was pitch-dark, and we did not know the road. The children, whom I was holding by the hands, screamed because they were overtired and afraid. My three rugs, the two rucksacks and the big hand-bag, which were all we possessed at the time, we had laid on a sledge which was standing deserted on the road. "Mother, come quickly into a warm house", Axel, who was only four years old, kept sobbing. With the assistance of an *SA* man who was passing by I tried to get into the adjacent villas, but they were all shut. The military cars, which passed, were all going in the direction of the front.

At last, however, we found a house which was open and had to be thankful, that it was possible for us to sit on the stone steps in the entrance hall. The same night I succeeded in getting into another dwelling. Here we got to know the Army, which had before helped us with such friendliness and devotion, from the other side. Here a captain of the railway headquarters had billeted himself along with his secretary, who was also his mistress. He brought her cakes and roast meat and let us look on, and he was so angry at our "invasion" that during the next days he preferred to sleep in the railway station.

The next day for hours we queued up in vain for bread. After waiting endlessly and collecting with the greatest trouble all possible kinds of coupons, we finally succeeded in getting 10 pounds of potatoes and a half a pound of oat meal. As we the next day also queued up in vain for bread, we began for the first time to be afraid of famishing. Finally a refugee family from the next-door flat gave us bread. We had enough in our rucksack to spread something on it, and the woman invited us to the midday meal. She had also got ready for the flight, and, therefore, became gradually less reserved. Thus we finally hoped to be able to stay a long time in these quarters. However, Mehlsack was to be evacuated very shortly.

As a senior lieutenant of a mechanized division was also quartered in the house, I approached him on the possibility of getting transport to Braunsberg. He and his comrades were just as obliging as the gentlemen of our staff company and arranged for us to go with a goods train. It was, however, necessary for us to remain two days in this train, before it departed. This was a hard test for my nerves, because the children were impatient and we had not much more food. Moreover, many more people got into the train, among them some who were typical criminals. When I heard the brutal and hoarse shouting, I had the feeling that we were in a low-class public house frequented by sailors at a port. The damp cold, and violent wind blew relentlessly through all crevices.

At the beginning when I once hesitatingly asked the unfriendly captain his opinion he answered in rage: "It's all madness, the pocket is already closed, no one will get out of East Prussia, any more people should remain where they are". But when I told him that we were departing for Braunsberg, he growled in reply: "Yes, the train is going and there is still an opening free over the *Haff*". His growling sounded like beautiful music in my ears.

I unfortunately do not any longer remember accurately the different dates, but we must have arrived in Braunsberg on about the 12. February. Also Braunsberg had just been again severely bombed, we, however, did not go through any big air-raids in the towns to which we came. We stood about for hours with a horde of other refugees in the unpleasant railway hall, to say nothing of the awful condition of the toilets. About midday a railway transport officer ordered all refugees to leave the hall at once and to go to the Town Hall. Here for the first time on our flight I saw the National Socialist People's Welfare organization in action; they distributed warm soup and biscuits to the children.

We were then all assigned continuously to the civil treks passing by, the leaders of which received us very unwillingly. They often had to be forced to do so by the *SA* men, at the point of the pistol. We came to a farmer from the district of Neidenburg. He was a tall powerful man who did not speak much. He was neither friendly nor unfriendly. We only talked about what was absolutely necessary and got on quite well together. This farmer had only a single labourer still with him, his family was already on the trek.

We used a country road to the *Haff*, and continued our journey further at night-fall over the ice. Before doing so we were compelled to put a wounded man who was suffering continual pain into our cart.

During the very first half-hour the colt, which was going at the side of the cart, broke both legs and had to be left behind. A short time afterwards one of the two strong horses pulling the cart fell into a hole in the ice and was with great difficulty liberated with an axe. The farmer trembled from head to foot, because he was afraid, that also this animal might break its legs, for one horse alone would not have been able to do the hard work. We were also compelled to go at long intervals, and also to remain for hours at the same spot. Everyone who tried to overtake the others was greeted with the most violent words and often almost beaten. As it had by now been thawing for a long time the ice was covered with a layer of water, and the longer we stood there the higher the water mounted over the ice.

I sat for a long time without moving and stared at the broad back of the farmer in front of me, and then through a crevice at his side over the wide extent of the *Haff* and the dark grey sky of the night spreading over it. Occasionally the way we had to go was indicated by torches. Then one could see the endless rows of the treks, which were proceeding at long intervals in silence and with an inconceivable slowness. I felt it was like an enormously long funeral procession, and slowly and relentlessly the cold kept creeping up us, until we, in the morning, tried to get our stiff limbs into another position.

When it got light it was possible to see the wrecks of the treks, and the motor vehicles which had broken through the ice. Some people had succeeded in saving themselves and were going further on foot. The journey continued a second night over the breaking ice, as far as Kahlberg. The children were getting continually more tired owing to the cold and the small amount of food and did not want to come out of the cart again. They became ill with a dysentery-like diarrhaea, which is called "the highway illness". We all became victims of this disease, and it caused us much trouble during our first year in Denmark.

Alas our poor wounded! I had before had quite a different picture of how I would look after them. How many of them had I met for instance already in Mehlsack, who came from the front bleeding and limping, sometimes with the very worst wounds. Also during the march across the *Haff* they were simply put by force into overcrowded treks, or lay on open hay-waggons in the midst of the snow, the storm and the rain. It was not until we reached Kahlberg, that they were taken over by medical orderlies and brought to an assembly place for wounded.

Kahlberg was a great disappointment for us. This place had had a beautifully sounding name, as being an idyllic sea-side place between the *Haff* and the sea. Now it was damp cold February weather there. All the streets were mushy, we sank over our ankles in mud and never got our feet dry again. There was no billet free for us, and we had to spend the night again with the children in the cart. The question of food now began to become the most vital problem. For hours I looked for food, in the town but I always had to come back again without having found any, because I was afraid of leaving the children alone too long. I then went to the *Kreisleiter's* office, where shiptickets for Danzig were to be distributed. I, however, heard there, that everyone had been sent away except pregnant women, and mothers with very many children. Those who had been sitting there from 5 o'clock in the morning were furious, because of the long delay. The *Kreisleiter,* trembling all over in rage, shouted, even at severely woundet men, and said he would have them removed by the police. Some women near me screamed: "Beat the Brown rascals to death. If the Russians were already here at least our children would perhaps have something to eat". In resignation I left the room. I also did not succeed in getting any more food, and every one, who passed by me with a loaf seemed to me to be the most enviable creature in the world. The golden times of the "forge-cart" seemed to me to be years back in the past.

Thirst was, however, much worse than hunger. Continually our tongues stuck to our gums, probably because we were continually in the open air. We were not allowed to drink water, because of the danger of typhoid, and coffee had become a luxury. However, now that we had the solid earth under our feet, we thought we had overcome the worst, and that we would get to the end of the *Nehrung* in a day and then find good and safe quarters

Oh this awful *Nehrung* road! This road was destined to be the most shocking part of our flight. It was so narrow, that two carts could scarcely go side by side. On the left hand side the ice surface of the *Haff* glittered, on the right hand side there was forest. In addition to being mushy, there was one hole after the other in the road, each one half as big as a room. There was indeed a second road, but this was reserved for the army. As the carts came one after another in an endless line, there were many stoppages, and also everything became confused. A third of the carts had had to be left behind on the ice, a further third broke down here. If anyone in front of us had a broken wheel, it always lasted some hours before we could go further.

This endless waiting and the prospect of having ourselves at any moment the same bad luck made the journey almost impossible. Again a hole, again very deep mud, again a rising in the ground! Should we get through this time? In the course of a whole day we advanced in this way only three to five kilometres. I shall never in my life forget the hoarse angry shouting of the farmer, who was tormented with fear, as he drove the horses on. Occasionally warm soup was distributed, but never a piece of bread. We often tried to beg some from the soldiers, but they had none at all with them, except occasionally a little crisp bread, and they were all by no means so pleasant as our friends of the forge-cart.

One afternoon, when the treks were again halting for hours, thousands of Russian prisoners were driven close past us. They were in rags and looked utterly miserable, many of them were Mongols, and each of them had two turnips hung on his uniform for food. Many of them went to the dead horses, which were lying around, and cut themselves a piece of flesh, which they ravenously devoured. One of the guards shouted out to me: "Be careful, young lady, they are hungry, one never knows, what can happen. The forest road is narrow and lonely, and if the prisoners attack the treks, no-one can do anything." I replied: "But we have our army." Although I was outwardly quiet, I was inwardly paralyzed with fear. The soldier shrugged his shoulders and said: "Good Lord, what can we few men do?" Nothing happened, thank God, and we advanced very slowly ahead. Beside the dead horses, many old people were lying on the road, and also mothers with infants were huddled together there Their treks had broken down on the way and probably not one of them reached Danzig, which at that time reminded us of the Island of the Blessed. Whilst the Russians were sending their artillery greetings from Elbing, I often wondered to myself, how awful it would be, if we had now to perish just before reaching our goal. For I could not walk ten steps forward with the children. Axel had an inflamed foot, because we could never take our shoes off, and little Olaf was much worse. But we again had good luck in bad luck: Our cart was one of the strongest; it had a super-structure with a roof and rubber tires. It is true, that we often had damage, but finally we all got to the end of this terrible road of death.

The farmer drove us a few Kilometres further, until we reached the huge assembly camp in Stutthof. Here I suffered a new hard blow. Unfortunately through not paying attention, I lost our last baggage and my handbag with money, savings books, all our important papers and the whole of our valuable family jewellery.

The roads inside the camp were indescribably dirty, my children lay ill in straw in a hut. The National Socialist People's Welfare organization was a complete failure. Only people, who were healthy and alone, could with any chance of success queue up the whole day for bread and water soup, I could not leave the children so long alone and no longer had any utensils to fetch food. I now had to learn to my bitterness, that great misery does not in general unite people, but that on the contrary they become more selfish and harder. In vain I threatened suicide and made desperate entreaties to civilian persons and supervisors.

At last, contrary to all that I should have expected, an *SS* officer helped me. He had the children brought by one of his men into a hut, where those persons were staying, who were to be first sent further on, that is to say in the course of the day. We were also given soup, and at night-fall we were not put into a train for Danzig but into an army truck, which was going to Dirschau.

We spent a comfortable night in a village near Dirschau, in a farm-house occupied by soldiers. There was warm water to wash, good food and radio music. Before we left the next day for Dirschau, the soldiers gave us a towel, soap and a wood-shaving basket, in which we could pack the food taken with us. This was like an oasis in the desert.

In the waiting room of the railway station at Dirschau, there were still waiters, tables with table-cloths, flowers and women wearing hats! It seemed to us like fairy-land. There were, however, unfortunately very few trains. The crowd of refugees was so great, and everyone so irritable and hateful against anyone who had a little advantage, that my hopes of ever getting to Danzig sank. Danzig was, however, the goal laid down for the refugees.

There we were to receive food and clothes, coupons and private billets. It seemed to us quite out of the question to have further plans.

In Dirschau we had another piece of luck. After the National Socialist People's Welfare Organisation had given us a few clothes for the children, I made the acquaintance of a friendly policeman in the waiting room; he had a friend, who was a railwayman and between them, they achieved the miracle of getting us two seats in the train for Danzig. We should never have succeeded in doing this alone.

On the 20. February we arrived in Danzig, and were first of all sent to a big reception camp. Here there were no beds but only chairs, and we had to remain there a day and a night almost without food. I was physically and spiritually completely at an end. However, acquaintances, who had read my name in the list of the arrivals, fetched us away the next day and kept us for three weeks in their home, and this, although they already had ten refugees there. They saw that we received everyting necessary, and above all it was at last again possible to look after the children properly. For the first ten days it was like living in paradise: the shops were open, the trams were running, and it was possible to cook, wash and heat the apartment. And after all we had been through, the few air-raids and the going down into the cellar was a trifle.

There were still some trains to Berlin. However, some friends of mine had to come back when they were half-way there, because the Russians were already in Pomerania, and were now from East Prussia and Pomerania closing in on Danzig. There were continual violent air-raids and alarming news kept coming in, that the Russians were continually pressing forward. On account of the bad health of my children, I wanted to put off continuing my journey to the *Reich* as long as possible. Many people wanted to make themselves homes in the cellars and not go further at all. I probably would not have summoned up the courage to continue my journey, if good friends of mine had not insisted on my doing so. Thus we went on the 12. March to the port of Neufahrwasser, and here we went on board the big auxiliary cruiser Hector on the 14. March. It had about 5000 refugees on board. The crew consisted almost exclusively of naval cadets. It was not until we were out at sea that the captain told us, that we were not going, as we thought, to a Baltic port but to Denmark.

The sea was calm and we reached the port of Copenhagen on the 19. March; our only trouble had been that the quarters were very bad.

No. 33

Eyewitness report of the school-master Otto Fritsch of Königsberg in East Prussia

Original. 26. May 1952.

Sinking of the "Karlsruhe" while transporting refugees

After being pensioned in April 1938 I lived with my wife in Königsberg (East Prussia). My only daughter was married to the school-master Koytek in Bischofsburg (East Prussia); he was also manager of the National Socialist Welfare organization there. On the 27. August 1944 I was bombed out in Königsberg and then moved with my wife to my daughter in Bischofsburg. When the flight began in January 1945 I went with my wife, my daughter and her three little children on the 22. January in a salvage train from Ortelsburg in the direction of Königsberg. On the 22. February my daughter with two children and myself arrived in Fischhausen in East Prussia. The youngest child of my daughter and my wife had already died. As no one was allowed to leave the town it was impossible for us to go further. On the 7. April the town was violently bombed and the attacks began to get worse; the result was that an order was issued on the 10. April to immediately evacuate the town. On the 10. April a train brought us to the Port of Pillau, where we were put on board the freighter "Karlsruhe", and in the evening steamed away at about 8 o'clock.

Early the next day we reached the promontory of Hela where the ship docked. Here a large convoy was assembled and our ship had to join it. Just before the departure of the convoy the leading ship came to us and enquired about our load, our speed and the number of persons on board. These were made up as follows: 888 East Prussian refugees, 25 railwaymen and half a company from the Hermann Goering Regiment, that is to say altogether a thousand people. As our ship could only do 7 nautical miles an hour, but the convoy wanted to sail at a speed of 9 nautical miles, we were to be taken in tow by another steamer; this, however, was not done, because there was no tow-line available. At 9 o'clock the convoy set out from Hela, but there was a fairly strong counter-wind.

For this reason, and as our ship could not keep up the pace, the convoy had the next morning, that is to say the 13. April, not travelled as far as had been laid down. The captain of the leading ship, therefore, offered to take our ship in tow, in order that the convoy could move more quickly. In order to fix the tow-line, both our ships had to halt for a time, and they were both a good distance behind the convoy. This was a favourable opportunity for the Russian airmen to attack both ships; for they did not venture to attack the main convoy, as it was strongly equipped with anti-aircraft guns.

At 9.15 o'clock there was air-raid alarm on our ship. A wave of hostile aircraft arrived but their bombs did not hit us and the machine-gun fire was about 30 metres out of line. One hostile plane was hit by our two anti-aircraft guns, fell about 50 metres away from our ship into the sea and sank. There immediately came a second wave of hostile planes. These sank our ship. One bomb hit the engine-room, which would perhaps not have caused the ship to sink, but one airtorpedo hit the side of the ship, so that it broke into two parts and in 3 or 4 minutes had sunk in the sea. It was terrible to hear the screams of those drowning and of those wounded by machine-gun fire and the torpedo.

My daughter with her two children and myself were standing on the deck. Then this broke in two under my feet, and I was thrown into the ice-cold water; when I came again to the surface I was able to catch hold of a beam floating in the water, and thus to save myself from drowning. After a short time there came near to me a square sheet-metal tin, apparently a kind of lifeboat with a cable around it. I gripped hold of this and held fast, until I was saved by the minde-sweeper No. 243. I had no idea where my daughter and her two children were. It was only four to five hours later, that I met my grandchild, who was 2½ years old, in a cabin of the ship. According to what the sailors told me, he had been sitting astride a short beam holding on with his two little hands and crying bitterly. My daughter and the other grandchild were drowned, for they were not on the ship where I was, and they were not on the list of those saved which the second ship had drawn up. The number of those saved on my ship were 72, whereas the other ship which had come to our rescue had taken on board about 80 people. Therefore, of the 1000 people who had been on the Karlsruhe about 150 were saved and 850 drowned. The ship which had saved us brought us to Denmark, where I remained with my little grandchild until 30. October 1947.

There follow some conclusive remarks of the author about the fate of his son-in-law.

No. 69

Report of Mrs. E. H. of Luggewiese, district of Lauenburg in Pomerania
Original. 13. June 1951.

An experience during the Russian invasion

According to orders from the mayor we had to evacuate our village of Luggewiese on 9. March 1945 and go to the neighbouring village of Gross Damerkow, which was only 4 kilometres away, but lay in the middle of a forest. I, therefore, set out with my two children, my mother and my sister Kate, who was 25 years old, and stayed with my parents-in-law who lived in Gross Damerkow. Many of our relatives and acquaintances had already fled there. On the next day, the 10. March the Russians stormed this place also. In the course of the day many other refugees had come from the other neighbouring villages, and we were at least 30 persons in one room. The first Russians who came into the houses, demanded watches, rings and other valuables. What was not voluntarily given was torn away from the people by violence. From us they also took our trunk with victuals. This went on for about two hours. As all the watches had been taken in the meanwhile and fresh Russians kept coming, the latter began to search and to curse. With their bayonets in their hands they kept continually calling out: "Watches! Watches!"

Suddenly a female neighbour came in screaming out that the Russians wanted to take her with them. There then came two Russians into our room: "Woman come", and seized two women by the hands. These women screamed and begged so much, that the Russians let them go and then went away.

Thereupon, a big Russian came in. He did not utter a single word, but looked around the room and then went to the back where all the young girls and women were sitting. He beckoned once with his finger to my sister.

As she did not stand up at once, he went close up to her and held his machine pistol against her chin. Everyone screamed aloud, but my sister sat mutely there and was incapable of moving. Then a shot resounded. Her head fell to the side and the blood streamed out. She was dead instantly, without uttering a single sound. The bullet had gone from her chin to her brain and her skull was completely shattered.

The Russian looked at us all, and went away again without uttering a single word. We laid my sister to her last rest in the cemetery of Gross Damerkow.

No. 109

Report of the District Chief Inspector Gustav Zolker of Namslau in Lower Silesia

Original. 27. November 1952.

Incidents when evacuating: Evacuation of the people to the district of Landeshut and further to the western part of the Sudeten country. The conditions there after the capitulation and the removal of the refugees to Saxony.

In the autumn of 1944 the work on the frontier fortification known as "The Barthold Enterprise" began. The people were called up for this work in the highest proportion possible. During the last months of the year 1944 the eastern front kept getting continually nearer to the Silesian frontiers. The population were not informed about the danger which would result. Indeed the District Party Organisation deliberately prevented any information getting out. It was only on the insistence of the deputy *Landrat* Frauenholz, that in the middle of January 1945 a meeting of the mayors of the district and of the political leaders was summoned to Stojan's Inn in Namslau; this inn was also called the Hotel Towngate. At this meeting the *Kreisleiter* pointed out, that the military situation gave no reason for anxiety, but all the same the plan for evacuation, should things become serious, was made known.

Files and official documents were not removed from Namslau. The only exception to this were the district and town savings banks, who brought their card index of accounts away in a horse-cart on the 19. January 1945. This was the day of the ordered evacuation. These documents remained later on in Luditz, which is in the Sudeten country. On the 19. January 1945 at 15 o'clock the *Kreisleiter* spoke publicly to the population of the town of Namslau, who were anxious because of the refugee treks from the eastern districts of Silesia and from the southern part of the Warthe area, and also because of the retreating columns of the army. He stated, that there was no reason for anxiety, as he had received information from higher authority, according to which the military situation was satisfactorily clarified. It was, however, no longer possible to put the people at ease, as Russian panzer spearheads had been already sighted at a distance of about 15 kilometres from Namslau. Two hours after the speech of the *Kreisleiter,* that is to say at about 17 o'clock his office published the order for evacuation, which had been issued by *Gauleiter* Hanke who was *Reich* Defense Commissioner for the area.

The farmers from the different villages were to take the population of the town with them. This, however, was a failure as the order had been issued too late. The town population waited in vain for the horses and carts. Some of the people, however, were taken away by retreating military vehicles. The trek from the village of Glausche could not start, although it had been got ready, because in the meanwhile the Russian panzer had reached the railway station of Glausche (route Namslau to Gross Wartenburg), and were blocking the road to Namslau. On the 20. January 1945 in the morning the panzer had disappeared, and the evacuation was able to be carried out as ordered. During this night many inhabitants and Russian, Polish and civilian workers employed on the Barthold Defense position were killed or wounded by machine-gun fire. In the village of Ordenstal the commander of the *Volkssturm* battalion of Landeshut, Silesia, was killed. He had taken the Russian for German panzer. The panzer shooting around in all directions passed very swiftly through the neighbouring place of Hennersdorf. Here there were also killed and wounded.

Dr. Heinrich, the *Landrat* of the district of Namslau was serving with the army. On the 19. January 1945 he arrived back in Namslau from a military course. This was a great piece of luck for the population of Namslau. Dr. Heinrich did not come officially, in order to do service in Namslau, but on his own initiative, in order to help, as the news which he had received gave rise to the very greatest anxiety. Owing to his intervention with higher authority of the government and with the *Reich* railway, trains were supplied for removing the population. These trains left the town at short intervals. Great numbers of the population were thus brought away from Namslau and the neighbouring villages.

The author here observes, that the Landrat and deputy mayor did not leave the town until it was being bombarded.

The reception district for Namslau was Landeshut in Silesia. The billeting of the refugees was carried out satisfactorily . . .

Summarizing things we can say, that the town and district of Namslau were almost completely evacuated. Only a small number of the population remained behind; these were for the most part aged people, who did not want to leave their homes. The small camp of Russian prisoners of war had been moved elsewhere, before the 19. January 1945. The evacuees from the west who were in Namslau, and also the prisoners of war of the Western Allies, who were almost entirely Frenchmen, left the district with the population. The *Landrat* tried to get house-hold and farm movable property out of the district. He, however, did not succeed, as there was not sufficient transport available.

The population remained about three weeks in Landeshut, and then an order was issued for strangers to be evacuated from the district of Landeshut. The population of the district of Namslau had to go to the district of Luditz in the Sudeten area, and which was near to Karlsbad.

In Luditz there was the greatest difficulty with the billeting, as other districts also had been sent here. The people of Namslau, were accommodated, when they arrived, in the refugee camp in the secondary school, and had to remain there for weeks. The rationing and sanitary conditions in this camp were indescribably bad.

The people of Namslau were not billeted in private houses, until Chief Inspector König, chief of the administrative office in Namslau, and the District Farmers' Leader Seidel, and also the *Landrat* of Luditz, had made repeated complaints and applications to the competent authorities.

There were really friendly relations with the population of the town and district of Luditz. Unfortunately, however, victuals began to get short, as there were no supplies coming in.

After the capitulation a jeep arrived with five American soldiers and one officer. These, however, only remained a few hours in the town, and for a short time kept coming every day again. A few days later, a Russian detachment came to Luditz as occupation. The sufferings of the population now began, and there was no distinction made between natives and refugees. Both night and day the Russian soldiers left the people no peace. Young girls and women had to be careful not to be seen in the streets and remained in hiding, as they were also not safe in their homes.

Meanwhile, Czech gendarmes, militia and civilian administrative officials arrived. There were endless searchings of houses and arrests of persons. In this regard the refugees got off comparatively better. Those arrested received for the most part, after being interrogated, a large swastika on their backs, and were then brought to the Czech school near the *Landrat's* office, in which I was then working.

These people were brought in and guarded by militia, which was clad in uniforms of the German Africa Corps.

The treatment in this prison was terrible, I worked 50 metres away and could still hear the screams. I also often met men, who had been beaten until they were blue all over, and who could only move if helped to do so.

Here the author gives an example.

When the Czechs took over the Sudeten country, the towns and villages were cleared of the refugees in them. Relying on the announcements of the victorious Powers, according to which the administrative frontiers of Germany should remain those of 1937, the expellees made their way home. On the 7. June 1945 I joined a trek of about 300 persons with 60 horses and carts.

The Czech office organizing the trek, had ordered that this was to appear before the town, in order to receive the trek identity cards. When we arrived there, we were driven together to a square, which was in the neighbourhood, and we were then surrounded by the militia. No-one was allowed to take more baggage than he himself could carry. The leader of the militia shot in the air with his pistol, in order to make us listen. He announced, that only so much baggage could be taken as each could carry with his hands, and that all the rest had to be left behind. Only one horse and cart might be taken for little children and sick persons. After negotiating with the Czech

Landrat, we were ultimately allowed to take five horses and carts with us. After waiting for five hours the trek started, and proceeded in the direction of the *Reich* frontier towards Saxony. After having gone a short way, the column was attacked by Russian soldiers, and the end of the column, which was straggling a little behind, was robbed of its few goods and chattels

A few days later, the trek was stopped by two Czech gendarmes, and two horses and carts were taken from us. These gendarmes did not only beat the trek leader but also several other persons, because the papers produced had not been properly stamped by the Czech authorities in Luditz.

About the middle of June 1945 we arrived at the frontier between Czechoslovakia and Saxony in the neighbourhood of Annaberg in Saxony. In the course of the Czech frontier control, all persons including small children were thoroughly searched by the militia. The controlling officials threw everything away, which they did not think to be necessary, with the result that we only kept, what we had on our backs. It must be mentioned, that in the course of this procedure people were ill-treated. Mühlbach, the district chauffeur, was well punched, as postage stamps with the head of Hitler on them, had been found in his wallet.

We now tried to pass as quickly as possible through Saxony, in order to get to Silesia. Near to Bautzen we were ordered to make a detour to the district of Kamenz in Saxony, and were forbidden to trek further; whether this was a piece of good or bad luck cannot be said.

The members of the trek were gradually distributed by the refugee office in Kamenz to different parts of the Soviet zone of occupation. At the present time, there are only a few people from Namslau in one place. A part reached West Germany after many wanderings.

No. 124

Eyewitness report of the clergyman G. S. of Neumarkt
in Lower Silesia.
Attested copy of a report to his superiors. 27. May 1950. 10 pages.
Printed in part.

Evacuation of a Silesian town to the Riesengebirge, and at the end of February further on to North Bohemia; experiences there after the capitulation, removal of the refugees to Saxony and their return home

When the Russian armies flooded into our Silesia in January 1945, we also had to leave our beloved home. Beginning on about 20. January a continuous, growing and uninterrupted stream of refugees poured day and night through the streets of our little district town of Neumarkt in Silesia. These people came from the right of the river Oder. They came in the icy cold muffled up, in an endless chain and passed before our amazed eyes towards the west. They were in trucks, and horses and carts on which the baggage was piled high, they had handcarts, sledges, tables upside down and other such make-shift devices, they had their domestic utensils and beds with them. A feeding-station was hastily set up for them and did good work. Many of them were given hot drinks, soup and bread.

We thought with anxiety of the day, on which we should also depart. Soon the order was issued to evacuate by stages the town, and all the other localities towards the Oder. First the aged, the sick and families with many children were brought away. My family was among these. We were to depart on the 27. January. In the morning of this day, those who were to be evacuated, stood with palpitating hearts on the snow-covered market place. From the north the thunder of the artillery was continually heard. The enemy was coming nearer. The news spread from mouth to mouth, that the S. family had poisoned themselves in the night, because they were afraid of the Russians, and that a number of respected women had hanged themselves. This news was a nightmare for the whole town. Finally the departure began on motor-busses to the light railway station of Schöneiche, which was 6 kilometres away; from there they were brought in a goods train to the Riesengebirge. The separation from my family was very hard, but I commended them all, my wife, my 5 children, of whom the youngest was not yet 3 years old, and my mother-in-law, to God's protection. Then I returned to the town, where I put myself at the disposal of the Red Cross for helping to remove old and sick people by motor vehicles. But we never got so far, as the cars were hung up somewhere or other with frozen engines.

On the next day, which was a Sunday, there was great confusion amongst the people who had remained behind, owing to the sudden awful news that the Russians had crossed the Oder in the west and in the neighbourhood of Maltsch, and further that they had broken through the thinned German lines and had thus cut off the possibility of flight to the south-west. The state of helplessness and confusion among the people increased; documents and funiture of the *Landrat's* office were quickly loaded in trucks, and the hospitals were completely evacuated. Some members of the *Volkssturm* and functionaries of the Party were seen going in a westerly direction with bazootas. It was stated, that all the ragged and worn-out prisoners of war in a column, who could not go any further, were shot by order of the *Kreisleiter;* for this he was later hanged in Breslau.

Shortly after midday the Red Cross, to which I had been assigned, departed. We reached in Schöneiche a train which was about to depart. Some of the wagons were open ones, but in spite of the icy cold, as a result of which some infants were frozen to death, we reached Landeshut in the Riesengebirge late at night, after having travelled eleven hours by way of Striegau, Bolkenheim and Märzdorf. The next day I succeeded in finding my family again, in mass-quarters at Liebau, and we were able to remain together in all future dreadful experiences. After having been ill for 8 days, I tried on the 9. February to return to Neumarkt, as we had heard, that it was not yet occupied. I, however, only got as far as Striegau, and landed there in the midst of retreating German troops. For in this night Russian panzer had broken through by the Autobahn leading from Liegnitz to Breslau, in order to surround Breslau from the west. All contact with Neumarkt was now broken off, and there remained nothing left for me but to return to Liebau.

Two days later the author had an accident.

After having remained only 3 days in Hohenelbe, our refugee transport was conducted at the end of February to the north-west part of the Sudeten country. As this locality, however, was overfilled, we had to stop sooner in the district town of Laun. In the neighbourhood of Laun we were unloaded in the Czech village of Riwitz; there were about 250 of us, and we were put into mass quarters such as schoolrooms, inns, and a gymnasium. We organized a camp management, a kitchen and a sickroom. The initial mistrust of the Czech population gradually ceased, and we lived with most of the villagers as good neighbours, with some families we became very friendly.

The author then shortly reports on his ministering to the refugees as a clergyman, and how Czech priests helped him.

We experienced also in our out of the way little village, that the military situation was getting continualdy more serious and threatening. Almost every day huge squadrons of bombers passed over us coming from the south, and we then heard the explosion of the bombs in the northern part of the Sudeten industrial district. In spite of this the Party tried up to the very end to make the people believe, that everything was alright. Thus on the 19. April the young people of 10 years of age, to whom also my second daughter belonged, were forced to carry out a propaganda march in Laun. On Hitler's birthday there was a public manifestation in the camp of the refugees, and after the 1. May there was a mourning procession for the "fallen" leader.

After a few days of uncanny calm, the storm burst in the Czech "protectorate". On the 4. May there were disturbances in our village. Armed guerillas broke into our camp, disarmed German soldiers and searched the refugees, particularly the leader of the camp, for arms. On the outskirts of the village there was shooting. The next day the Czech population collected on the market square, and there was great rejoicing over the news, that there was an armistice with England and America. All German texts on sign-posts and on the plates of firms were erased, Czech flags were hoisted, and the church bells rang.

At one stroke the attitude of the Czechs, who had up to then been friendly to us, changed, they became cold and avoided us. A detachment of German soldiers, which had up to then been in the camp for our protection, left the place at about midday, in order to return to the town. As I had something important to do there, and the railway was no longer running, I joined them. Our truck, however, was overtaken on the way by heavily armed guerillas, and the soldiers did not think of defending themselves, but were disarmed and led away. The leader of the band of guerillas kept threatening me with his pistol, and it was only with the greatest difficulty, that I was allowed to go and to return.

On the 8. May two Czechs and one Russian, who had been shot, were buried. Very great numbers of the population attended the funeral. We Germans had to be careful not to be seen in the streets, and even not to come to the windows. Shortly afterwards, there was a fresh commotion, caused by a shooting affray between a motor-car, coming from Prague, and Czech gendarmes.

All the occupants of the car, some of whom were *SS* soldiers, also the women and children were shot, and Germans had to bury them in the wood. A threat to shoot all the refugees, if another single Czech were killed, caused great terror amongst us. I remember, how I found inner fortitude from the following verse of Paul Gerhardt: "No death can kill us, but it only frees us from thousands of sufferings".

On the 9. May there came the order from the police to pack and depart. A cart was put at our disposal to carry the baggage as far as the frontier of the Sudeten country, and the good Czech farmer, in whose house we had lived, even secretly gave us potatoes, bread, eggs and butter.

At the frontier we, for the first time, came into contact with Russian soldiers, who searched and plundered many of us. In the next village we found quarters in a deserted sheep-farm, and now we went from place to place with handcarts or farmcarts as far as the district town of Saaz, which was occupied by the Russians. Great masses of refugees had collected here, and it was difficult for us to find quarters. Finally I succeeded in getting my family accommodated in a gymnasium, which had been converted into a refugee camp.

Here preparations were made for returning home.

The women were particularly frightened at night, when the Russians came away, drunk from their victory carousals. On the next day, when the building was being cleared up, an unexploded shell suddenly exploded, and two women lay bleeding on the ground, one of whom soon succumbed to her severe injuries. We finally went to the railway station, and after waiting a long time, we departed to Bodenbach in an overcrowded train, via Dux and Aussig. It is hardly possible to describe, how the Germans were being goaded on under their heavy loads of baggage and panting in the heat, as they collected completely exhausted at the railway stations. We had quarters in a school in Bodenbach for two days. Then we had a beautiful dream amidst these scenes of horror, and went in the beautiful sunlight on two coal barges, which were towed together, down the Elb through the Sächsische Schweiz (Saxon Switzerland) as far as Pirna; here, however, our journey was stopped by a blown-up bridge.

We were at last back in Germany. However, fresh difficulties cropped up; for where could we find a room in the overcrowded town? At 10 o'clock at night my wife and children were still in the streets. When I knocked at the door of the vicarage, they did not let us in, because they were afraid of a prohibition from the Russians. Then the family of a business man had mercy on us, and we remained with them for about ten days. These were necessarily days of rest after the previous exertions and commotions. We were also ill, one after the other, and had to be treated by a doctor. Finally a part of the family were accommodated in the vicarage.

We had, however, to depart, because food coupons had been given us for only a few days, and we were told to return as quickly as possible to our home. And we wanted at all costs to return home, and not to go to Bavaria whither many had already gone. For we had been assured in Czechoslovakia, that the left bank of the Oder in Silesia would remain German. The difficulty was to get further, as the railway lines and bridges had been destroyed for long distances, and columns of refugees were frequently attacked and completely plundered by workers from eastern countries who had to work in Germany and returned home now; but it would be impossible to walk these long distances with baggage and small children.

I, therefore, determined at the end of May, and after Whitsuntide, in spite of the disturbing reports that the Germans were being maltreated in the Sudeten country, all the same to risk the return through this hasardous country. For there were hopes of getting direct trains back from there. I went in advance to Bodenbach, and got information about train connections. Then we all set out on the return to the Silesian frontier at Polaun, by way of Bodenbach and Reichenberg. Here we were allowed to pass over the frontier and breathed freely again; it is true that our baggage was first of all twice searched by Czech customs officials, and that the second search was nothing but a piece of plundering.We then finally reached the beautiful spot of Oberschreiberhau in the Riesengebirge and then Hirschberg.

We then had to make a pause of several days to rest. But this time the vicarage immediately offered us hospitality, and Mr. Prüfer, the clergyman, put a spacious room at our disposal and that of other refugees. We were truly thankful to God, that we were again on home soil, and had found refuge, if only a temporary one. Hirschberg, however, was occupied by the Poles. There was the greatest difficulty in getting ration cards, but we were on the last stage of our journey. On the 10. June we were able to depart from Hirschberg, and after exhausting marches, some of the children had bleeding feet, we first of all reached Goldberg, and on the next day Liegnitz. We had to go by roads, some of which were mined, continually passing by desolate and deserted houses and masses of ruins, which wore the traces of the fighting. We were put up at night by friendly people, until we at last reached Parchwitz, and saw at last on the fourth day, with tears in our eyes, the spires of our home town.

The author now describes life under the hard conditions of the Russian occupation, and the chicanery, and arbitrary and coercive measures of the Polish authorities against the German population. In particular he describes the first attempt to drive the Germans out at the end of June 1945 and the official expulsion at the end of May 1946.

Second Section

DESTRUCTION OF THE BASIC CONDITIONS FOR THE SURVIVAL OF THE EAST GERMAN POPULATION

No. 138

Eyewitness report of Erich Gerhardt, owner of a saw-mill, in Christburg, district of Stuhm in West Prussia
Original. 1. January 1951.

Transport by way of Ciechanow (Zichenau) to Anjerka (Central Siberia); high mortality among the deported

The author first of all describes his own situation, before and during the entry of the Russian troops. In this connection, he mentions his attempt to visit his mother on the 7. February 1945.

I knocked on the window, and called my mother loudly several times. She did not answer, and I assumed, that only Russians were in the house.

(My mother told me afterwards, that after the first plundering she had fled to the Nax family in Klein-Stanau, and had got there just when the Russians had shot old Mr. Nax. Mrs. Nax and my mother put the corpse under the snow.) I was now among the Russians, and simply went into our house, where they arrested me, immediately after my entry. I was shut up in the cellar, where there were about 50 other people in the dark. In the evening I was brought to the farmstead of the Catholic vicarage, in Christburg . I was locked up in the hay-loft over the stables, with about 150 other people from all the surrounding country. Here we were kept for about 5 days. We received no bread, once a day we received a fatty soup made of pork, a piece of pork in our hands, and a handful of potatoes cooked in their skins.

On the sixth day we were driven to Rosenberg, and we took 2 days to get there, going by way of Alt-Christburg, Sandhof, where we spent the night in a barn, Forstmühle and Finkenstein, here we saw, that the old castle was completely burnt down. There were about 800 of us, all civilians, men, women, boys and girls ranging from 12—70 years of age. In Rosenberg we were quartered for about 5 days in a scattered settlement of the East Prussian Land Company, and there were about 100 of us in each building. Everyone had to feed himself from what he could find in the houses. The Russians gave us nothing.

At Rosenberg we were put into a transport train for cattle, and reached Zichenau in Poland in 2 days, having travelled by way of Deutsch-Eylau. We were now taken out of the train, and shut up in the new houses, each built for 4 families, of German officials. I estimate, that about 2500 people were crowded together in one building, containing 4 flats each consisting of 4 rooms, a cellar and attic. I met many acquaintances from home here. *The author gives a list of names.*

We remained in Zichenau about 10 days, and received daily 2 slices of Russian dry bread and half a tinful of the thinnest meal soup. At the end of February 1945 we were loaded into Russian wagons, 45 of us in each one. There were about 40 wagons in the transport. We numbered about 1600 people, half of us women and girls, and the other half men and boys.

In Zichenau many of us had dysentery, and some dead were taken out of the building every day. The corpses were thrown naked into the anti-air-raid trenches, and remained there uncovered.

During the month of February the transport departed in the direction of Minsk. It was horribly cold on the way, and the dead were all collected in one truck. We reached Moscow, and a few days later Tula. In Tula I was ordered to the corpse bearing commando. We carried the dead, who numbered about 80, on stretchers, 2 on each stretcher, for about 1 kilometre along the railway line, and then had to throw them down the embankment into the snow. The corpses were probably gnawed at by game and birds. None of us knew who the dead were, and the Russians registered the numbers only.

We received food on the way, according to when the train was able to stop. Early in the morning we were given about 150 grammes of dry bread, about 10 grammes of lard, or American preserves and a small cup of thick soup, made either of groats or peas or meal. We had the same again in the evening. I would add, that we were also given 2 small pieces of lump sugar with each meal.

In the middle of February we passed through the Urals. We were deloused, and once received, a good meal in Swerdlowsk. This town was formerly called Jekaterinenburg, and is known, because the Czar and this family were shot there. We again got into the wagons, and started on the second half of the journey.

On the 2. April 1945, presumably an Easter holiday, we reached the place called Anjerka, which is in Central Siberia, and is known for its collieries which produce excellent coal. We were again deloused, and put into a camp. By reason of the date of the year 1934, which I found there, I ascertained, that prisoners had been there before.

We now had 14 days rest, in order to recuperate, as we were told. Instead of fat we were given rancid oil in our soup. Dysentery and also typhus raged there; every day at least 6 people died. The numbers of deaths rose to 28 a day in May 1945. The corpses were stripped naked, and thrown into a refuse hole. At nightfall the corpse-bearing commando was called out of the camp. I had to go every night, as I had been denounced to the Russians as being a former capitalist. Two men had in each case to take a barrow for carrying stones, and to fetch a corpse out of the refuse hole, and then put it across the barrow. Marching one after the other we had to start on our way, in the dark up and downhill and across ditches to bring the corpses 2 kilometres away to the prisoners cemetery. I often carried acquaintances, for instance the farmer Speckmann of Liebwalde, Max Börger who was about 17 years old of Taabern near Saalfeld, the 51 year old farmer Steinke of Preussisch Mark, the farmer Gehlhaar of Reichenbach who was about 58 years old, the owner of a dairy, named Nickel of Baumgart near Elbing who was about 55 year old, the post office assistant Kaiser of Grunau near Elbing, who was about 47 years old, the wife of the provincial head of the Foresters of Gross-Arnsdorf near Pollwitten, and a great number of young girls, women, men and boys. Until the middle of May 1945 as many as 28 persons died in a day, and were put into a refuse hole. Then there came an order, that every corpse should have a grave for itself. Extra grave commandos were sent out during the day, who were to arrange for graves, regularly for about 30 a day.

We were employed exclusively for coal mining work underground, without any consideration for age and sex, and when we left the camp on the 31. August 1945, we had put about 700, of our companions in misery into the Siberian soil.

In July 1945 it was my turn to be ill, and I lay for some time unconscious, and bleeding from the mouth. After some weeks rest in a wooden bunk, I recovered somewhat and was sent to work on a collective farm. Afterwards the rest of us worked in a glass factory, followed by erecting timber buildings and work on a vegetable collective farm, with an area of 2000 German morgen.

We were eternally hungry. I was 1.76 metres tall, and my weight went down to 98 pounds, and yet I was one of the best. Treatment by the Russian guards was almost always very bad. We were simply walking skeletons, and when it was bitterly cold and more than 60° below zero Centrigrade, we had to get up at 7 o'clock in the morning to go to work, and to walk for 100 minutes and to be at 9 o'clock, when it was just getting light, at our place of work. Many were frozen to death during their work, and others were carried back by us unconscious at knocking-off time, and a few hours later were dead. The young man, von Gottberg of Preußisch-Wilten, who was about 18 year old, died without doing a stroke of work.

From the first to the last day our life was a ceaseless suffering, a dying and lamentation. The Russian guards mercilessly pushed the very weakest people forward with their rifle-butts, when they could hardly move. When the guards used their rifle-butts, they made use of the words, "You lazy rascal." I was already so weak, that I wanted to be killed on the spot by the blows with the rifle-butts. All that I have read in peace time by Edwin Dwinger about Russia, as for instance, "And God is silent", and what then filled me with horror, was put into the shade by what we passed through.

From the early winter of 1946 I was finished, and was unable to continue. I was allowed to remain in the camp, to rest, and had better food, but always so little, that I did not get able to work again. In this way, I spent a whole year in the camp, until on the 28. October 1947, a medical commission declared me to be no longer fit for work, and ordered me to go back home, with another 28 men and 13 women.

Our transport departed from Anjerka on the 30. October, a few days later we reached Nowo-Sibirsk, where we were joined to a transport of 800 persons, and reached Frankfurt on the Oder on the 27. November 1947.

Those of us, who had relatives in the British zone, passed over the zone frontier at Friedland-Göttingen at the beginning of December. The turnpike was opened, and after years of suffering and a life in the midst of death, we again returned to freedom, for which we had been longing so many years. I was at once put into the military hospital at Königslutter, and after 3 months came into the hospital for repatriated prisoners at Klein Bülten near Peine, and finally I was transferred to Bremerhaven. After lying ill for 10½ months, I was discharged, and certified to be 70% war disabled, as a result of hunger, cold and hard labour.

Our clothing during our internment was very bad. Our civilian clothes had for the most part been taken away from us, at the beginning in Zichenau, we had been instead given ragged German uniforms. In winter we received padded trousers and jackets, fur caps, and each of us a fur. We only received underclothes of ragged linen stuff, and had to keep them on for 3—4 months, without being able to wash then. During the whole 3 years we only once received socks or foot rags.

In conclusion the author gives a number of impressions he had gained, when the Russians marched in, and combines them with statements about destroyed buildings in the city of Christburg.

No. 140

Eyewitness report of F. K. of Burgkampen (Jentkutkampen)
district of Ebenrode (Stallupönen) in East Prussia.
Original. November 1951.

Treatment of German deportees on the way to forced labour in the Ural

I was taken prisoner by the Russians on the 1. February 1945 along with my family and many other companions in misery, when we were trekking from East Prussia. We were driven together in hundreds into the area of Rastenburg. More and more refugees kept joining us. We were then loaded onto trucks, women, old and sick men, and children closely packed together, so that we could only stand jammed together. No one could turn or move. That was the beginning of our misery. The journey was from Rastenburg by way of Insterburg, Gumbinnen, Stallupönen and Eydtkuhnen. 30 kilometres behind the Lithuanian frontier we stopped and were dragged out of the trucks. Children up to 10 years of age were dragged from their mothers. The mothers wrung their hands and the children shrieked frightfully. It was a heartbreaking sight.

We were then locked up in a barracks. There was no room for us all there, but the Russians drove us together with rifle-butts, until the rooms were so overcrowded, that we were standing packed together like sardines. This we had to endure three days. Once a day we got a thin water soup. Boards had been so closely nailed across the windows, that no fresh air came in. There was one room still free, into this room the men were driven, had to strip naked there, in order that our clothes could be separately searched. Valuables, such as documents, photographs and wedding rings were stolen. Even the trousers-braces were cut through before our eyes. Many a man lost his nerves during this procedure.

During the third night, that is to say on the 5. February 1945, we were again loaded onto trucks and taken to a railway station. There was a long goods train there, and 120 people were forced into each wagon, women and men separately. From now on our sufferings grew worse. The wagons were filthy from top to bottom, and there was not a blade of straw. When the last man had been driven in by blows with rifle-butts, we could only stand packed together like sardines. This was the way, in which we departed for the Ural. When we were being loaded, the Russians treated us like cattle, and many people became demented. A bucket of water and crumbs of bread, served up to us on a filthy piece of tent canvas, were our daily food.

The worst part were the nights. Our legs got weak from the continual standing, and the one leant against the other. The state of affairs was impossible, for the journey lasted 28 days. When the train stopped, mostly for the night, we were not left in peace. The guards came to the wagons, and hammered on them from all sides. We could not understand, why this was done[433]). But this happened almost every night. 10 to 15 men had already died during the first eight days. We others had to carry out the corpses naked under guard, and they were piled up at the end of the train like wood in empty wagons. Every day more and more died.

Our condition was made worse by the fact, that in all the wagons there were some Poles and Lithuanians. These broke out of the train one night, but were again caught, and then distributed one by one amongst us Germans. They thought, however, that they had more rights than we, and made room for themselves by lying on top of weak persons; they took no notice, when these screamed because of being stifled by the weight. When the food came, they stormed it, and very little remained over for us Germans. We slowly perished in the course of this death-journey.

Thirst was worse than hunger. The iron fittings of the wagons were damp throught the vapour and breath. Most of the people scratched this off with their dirty fingers and sucked it; many of them got ill in this way. The mortality increased from day to day, and the corpse wagons, behind the train, continually increased in number.

About the 2. March we arrived at the Ural, there were then 30 to 40⁰/₀ less men in each wagon than when we started. The rest of us poor wretches looked like a crowd of walking corpses. After we had stumbled out of the train, we had to parade in front of it, and kneel for two hours in deep snow. Many of them froze to death, for the temperature was 45° below zero centigrade. We were covered from head to foot with a crust of dirt and filth, and looked terrible. The Russians led us in this state stumbling or rather creeping through the roads of the Ural. The Russian population stood on the edge of the road with terror in their faces, and watched the procession of all these miserable people. Those, who could not walk any further, were driven on, step by step, by being struck with rifle-butts.

We now stopped in front of a sauna-bath. This was fatal for most of us. For everyone was thirsty and rushed to the basins, which were full of dirty water, and each drank until he was full. This immediately caused the awful dysentry illness. Here we were again plundered When we finally came to camps, more than a half of what remained of us poor wretches already had typhoid. In a few days many died of this illness. Those, who recovered, were dragged from camp to camp, and had to do the hardest kind of work. The majority of us were farmers from Stallupönen, Gumbinnen and many from the district of Rastenburg. A small remainder was sent back home after two years.

What I have here reported, I have been through with my own family. My poor wife died, as a result of this catastrophe.

No. 143

Eyewitness report of Gerlinde Winkler of Dörbeck,
district of Elbing in West Prussia
Original. 25. June 1951.

Deportation of men and women by way of the assembly camp at Insferburg to the Soviet Union. Conditions in different camps of the district of Tscheljabinsk, until the return of sick people and those unable to work in June 1948

On the 27. January 1945 the Russian combatant troops broke into my native village of Dörbeck. Only six families had fled from our village. I myself had remained at home on the farm of my parents.

The authoress gives a short description of the conduct of the soldiers of the Red Army and continues:

For fourteen days the Russian occupation of the panzer-trench of Elbing honoured us with their presence, and then took all the food away with them. Then came the occupation troops. Within half an hour we were driven out of our house, and found refuge along with 40 others in a room, belonging to our neighbour. One evening girls, young women without children, and men were fetched away for the alleged purpose of working. But the procedure developed into a nocturnal examination. The Russians selected two girls and raped them; our German men had to look on without being able to do anything. After this sleepless night, we were allowed to go away for two days, but on the third day, we were seized in the evening by the Soviet secret police.

We were driven like the worst kind of criminals under very close guard into a small room of a house, situated in the lower half of the village. There we saw a number of girls and women. The men were quartered in the next door house. Packed together, we remained three days there.

On the 17. February we had to walk to Schwangen in the district of Preussisch Holland. A cowshed served as our quarters. During the three days we were there, we were cross-examined regularly, but only at night. Then we had to walk further to Preussisch Holland. Here the men were locked up in the coal cellar. We women were allowed to remain in two rooms above. We were not allowed to open the windows for fear, that we might escape. Twice a day we were allowed to relieve ourselves outside in the snow. Washing was not considered important. Once a day, there was a thin pea-soup with worms in it. The result of course was, that many got dysentry; among them was a female cousin of mine.

From Preussisch Holland we went in a truck to Bartenstein, and were delivered at once into a penitentiary. I was put with 30 women into a cell, which was intended to accommodate one person. The narrow space, into which we were rammed, was unbearable and our legs were all entangled together. Our work consisted in being hungry. The women, ill with dysentry, were only allowed to go out once a day, in order to relieve themselves. A bucket without a cover was pushed into the cell with the remark: "Here you have one, you German sows". The stink was insupportable, and we were not allowed to open the little window.

We were loaded onto trucks and taken to Insterburg, and there we were, of course, brought into the penitentiary, as if we were the worst sorts of criminals. During the night our names were continually called out, but the Russians had difficulty in pronouncing them.

On the 3. March at dawn we were taken to the goods stadion at Insterburg and put into cattle trucks, 50—52 women in each one. We then went away, we women of Dorbeck, clinging to one another, as if we did not want to get lost. It is impossible to describe, what this cattle truck looked like, the filth from the last cattle transport was on the walls. We had to dry up the snow lying on the floor of the truck with our bodies, for we were not allowed time to clear the snow out, but the truck was immediately bolted, after the last woman had got in, for fear one of us might escape at the last moment. 80 of the men from Dorbeck, among whom was my brother, were crammed into a truck, which was a little bigger. We sat on the floor with drawn-up knees and only anyone, who was utterly unable to sit in this position, was allowed to lie down, and for this one person 3 of us had to stand.

Dry bread, that is to say, crumbs of it, was the only food we received, it was given us in the forenoon, and in the afternoon we received a bucket of water with a layer of ice on it. It did not matter, whether the water was clean, or filthy and had had rotting animals in it. By chance my cousin Erika Winkler had a tin which had been used for preserves, and amongst us we also found a little pot. Out of these we drank greedily, for everyone wanted to have at least one gulp.

During the 21 days of our journey we received warm food three times. My other cousin Anneliese Gaese, who had already had dysentry in Preussisch Holland, died on the 14. March 1945. The Russians left the corpse with us 3 days in the truck, without worrying about it. Two other women died, but I have forgotten their names. One young girl had her toes frozen, no Russian showed himself. I bandaged her feet myself, as I happened to have bandaging stuff with me. In the camp at Maschalinka[434]), a Russian nurse cut off all the girl's ten toes with scissors. Blood-poisoning followed at once, and the girl was dead within a day.

On the 23. March we were unloaded. It was for me an indescribable torture to walk the 2 kilometres from the railway station to the hut-camp in

Maschalinka. My knees were so weakened by the transport, that I could scarcely bend them, and they continually collapsed. The quarters were exceptionally bad. We slept in double wooden bunks one over the other. During the first 14 days there were no straw sacks at all, the bare boards were good enough for us. We were then allowed to go to frozen dunghills, in order to get straw from them and fill the sacks with it. The rugs, which we had brought from home and still had, were taken away from us and given to the sick in the so-called hospital. I had to cover myself up with a thin mantle, and my second dress, which I had managed to bring with me at the last moment from home, served as a mattress. We could not undress at night, because of the enormous number of bugs. The hospital, which looked just like the huts of those who were not sick, was from the first day overcrowded. Mortality, however, regularly made room for others. It was a great exception, if 5 men and women did not die every day. Out of about 600 occupants of the camp 380 died. The Russian nurse, who had charge of the hospital, came every morning with the question: "Is another woman dead?" If the answer was in the affirmative then her eyes shone with joy. If the answer was in the negative, the best thing to do was to avoid her, for she then vented her fury on our nurses. The first Russian doctor, who arrived in Maschalinka after a month, did very much to ease the condition of many patients, but his hands were fettered, for he had no decent bandaging material and no adequate medicaments.

After ten days quarantine we were put on to the most senseless camp work and cleaning up. Our food consisted of thin cabbage water soup three times a day, the spots of fat in it could not have been seen with a magnifying glass, in addition to this we received 600 grammes of dry bread, and at midday a few small teaspoonfuls of millet or oatmeal gruel. We were so strengthened by this diet, that some detachments of women were sent to the colliery to work on the surface. A detachment of men was also sent to the colliery, and had to work in the pits, among them was my brother. After being examined the first time by a medical commission, I was put into labour category no 1 and was, therefore, declared fit for working in the pits. We had to collect the coal on our knees, as the mine galleries were only 1.5 metres high. During these 4 weeks of colliery work we were subjected to cross-examinations. The Russians made the most ridiculous allegations, but anyone who denied these, passed the night in a cell, and, of course, had to work the next day in the pit.

On the 13. July 1945 I was separated from my brother. My sister-in-law and I came to the camp of Rosa. There the mortality was still higher than in Maschalinka, 10 to 12 persons died every day, they almost all died of malnutrition, dysentry, dropsy or stomatitis. We were sent from the camp of Rosa to collective farms. There we had to do hard work in the fields from sunrise to sunset, both on weekdays and on Sundays.

At the beginning of October 1945, it was rumoured, that we were going to be discharged. This did not happen, but we were despatched after 5 days, and brought to the prisoners of war camp in Kystim. In this camp there was at least good order and cleanliness, also in sanitary respects, this was thanks to the German leaders of the camp. German specialist doctors, who were among the prisoners of war, looked after the in and outpatients. The time for work was better arranged, so that one was also able to some extent to look after one's clothing. In January 1946 we were then sent to shovel snow away at a temperature of 54° below zero Centigrade. Many had their hands and feet frozen off.

On the 30. April 1946 a number of men and women were brought in open trucks to the assembly camp in Tscheljabinsk; it was alleged that they were going home. On this journey I got malaria. The gardening collective farm of Parnikowa belonged to the camp of Tscheljabinsk. Here we were brought in trucks. There was much work to do; there all were absoluately compelled to do the high "norm". However, if this "norm" was done, the next day it was increased. We were cheap workers out of whom the Russians could extract the last fraction of work. At the beginning of October 1946 we were for the first time allowed to send a postcard with 25 words home to Germany.

In the winter of 1946—1947 we were sent to a collective farm in Smolino. The food there was awful, for our evening meal we literally received nothing but water. Anyone, who did not do his "norm" of work was given daily only 500 grammes of bread. I myself was no longer capable of working. The middle of March a truck went back with women to the camp. I had the luck to come for a time into the camp as a convalescent and to rest. This rest, however, did not last long, and within 8 weeks I was declared fit enough to do the hard work in the panzer works of Tscheljabinsk. Every day I had to work 8 to 10 hours pushing heavy pieces of iron on carts. In July 1947 I received my first post from home.

The winter of 1947—1948 I passed on the collective farm of Tomino doing heavy timber work in the forest: at a very low temperature and up to my knees in snow. We drove into the forest with sleighs dragged by oxen. Owing to the extreme cold we had to walk, in order not to return to the hut with frozen limbs. In the evening we fell dead tired and exhausted into our bunks.

From February to May 1948 I went back to work in the panzer factory. I had at the time pains in my kidneys, but our German doctor could not report me sick, as I had no high temperature. Anyone, who had not high temperature, was simply not ill. Therefore, I had to crawl about for 14 days suffering from septic nephritis. At last I fainted, and was brought into the hospital with a temperature of 38° C. I was then taken into a Russian town hospital to undergo an operation. A Russian doctor carried it out. After remaining there 14 days, I was taken back to the camp hospital. On the 17. June 1948 I was loaded into the home transport. From the camp of Tscheljabinsk (no 7602) only sick and weak persons were sent home. In Brest-Litowsk we were bodily searched for the last time, the purpose was to destroy anything we had written or adresses we had noted, and so to make the lot of those, who had remained behind, worse. On the 28. June 1948 we arrived in Frankfurt on the Oder.

No. 151

Eyewitness report of a teacher in a professional school
Karl Theodor Maschwitz of Trebnitz in Lower Silesia
Original. 4. June 1951.

What happened to 15 deportees of Trebnitz and of the neighbourhood; their lives in the camps of Alschewsk and Makejewka in the Donez territory

The author gives a list of the names of his 14 comrades, at the beginning of his report.

On the 4. February 1945 the Russian secret police requisitioned the office rooms in the monastery at Trebnitz, and began their work.

On the 5. February all male persons in the monatsery from 16—60 years of age were locked up, under guard in the hut for Frenchmen, which was in the monatsery, and some of them were continually brought up for cross-examinations. Most of the men were detailed for clearing-up work. On the 6. February I was twice cross-examined, with the help of an interpreter, who understood hardly any German; I was then suddenly arrested. Even today I do not understand why. After all that I owned, including the clothing, which I had on my back, had been taken away from me, I was shut up in the cellar of the house of Prehn in Breslauer Street, along with the druggist Fila and the wheelright May of Peterwitz. Here we remained 12 days under the most horrible conditions, without light, in the midst of filth and overrun by lice; there were Poles and Russians along with us. The number of those from Trebnitz and the neighbourhood amounted to 15.

Sch. was already very ill, when he was thrown into the cellar and had continually high fever. He was accused by some of his fellow prisoners of having made false statements, and of having said at the cross examinations that several of his comrades had belonged to the Party. He vehemently denied this. Everyone was examined individually and nothing could be proved against him. My case proved, that the Russians acted quite arbitrarily, when arresting people. Personally I am convinced, that Sch. was completely innocent of causing the arrest of several of us. Most of us were of the same opinion.

On the 15. February I was suddenly brought with a transport to Heinzendorf, but came back again on the 17. to Trebnitz.

The food in the cellar at Trebnitz was monotonous, but good and sufficient, the treatment severe but without excesses.

At 6 o'clock in the morning, on the 18. February, we suddenly received double bread rations. At 7 o'clock about 150 prisoners, were brought out of the cellars everywhere, and departed for Oels.

Sch., whose condition continued to get worse, as he was not treated by a doctor, was struck by a Mongol with a pistol butt, until he bled and lay unconscious on the ground; this was done to him, because he could not walk. Then he was laid on a hand-cart, and brought away with us. Almost without stopping once, we went by way of Bingerau to Oels. This was a distance of 35 kilometres, which I had to do, although I had an artificial leg.

Sch. died, when we were half-way there. His corpse was left at the railway station in Oels, and was probably buried in the neighbourhood. The same evening we proceeded by train to Cracow, and got there after 3 days, with practically no food on the way. There we were confined in the prison of Monte Lupa, and remained there about 12 days. The food was extremely scanty, and the plague of lice was unbearable. After we had been deloused, and all our hair shorn off, we went with a big transport to the interior of Russia, or a distance of about 2000 kilometres.

The journey was awful. There were more than 40 men in each wagon; 18 of them were Germans, the rest were Vlassoff soldiers, that is to say Turcomans, Tartars, Caucasians and Russians. The food was very bad, as we Germans were at a disadvantage in almost everything. We received no drink water, and, therefore, ate snow on the way. The result were catarrhs of the stomach, accompanied by severe diarrhoea, and several of us became very ill (among others a farmer of Paulskirch, Muller of Raschen and Münthner). These men were hardly able to stand on their legs, after they had been 14 days on the way. Also Fila and Ulbrich had bad attacks.

When we reached the end of our journey, and came to Alschewsk near Voroshiloffgrad in the Donez coal district, we were at once put into a camp, in which we remained, until the 18. September 1945. A state of chaos was there, when we arrived, only 3 huts, in which about 2400 men were packed together, 80—100 men in one room. There were no latrines, and no kitchen, before the third day. The snow was about half a metre deep, but was thawing very hard. After 2 days the Vlassoff soldiers were separated from us, and brought away. They numbered about 800. The rest of us were gradually distributed to the other huts. The internees were sent to the town to get steel bed-steads, which had been made by German prisoners of war in the steel-works. The whole town consisted almost entirely of these works. There were about 30 men in one room, so that after 3—6 days the accomodation was fairly comfortable.

The above-mentioned men, who were seriously ill, were brought in a dying condition to a provisional military hospital, and actually died there the next day. The doctor, who was a Pole from the neighbourhood of Rybnik, detested Germans, and left as many as possible to die. The personnel, who were both Germans and Poles, saw a chance of robbing the patients of everything valuable, and the stolen things were sold at the bazaar and at the public Russian black-market. They also stole, as far as they could, the patients' food, and then thought that they had done their duty.

It was useless to complain to the Russian administration about this state of affairs, as they were not at all interested in the matter, and left the whole management to the leaders of sections, who were themselves prisoners, and mostly Poles. The corpses of the dead were buried in the camp cemetery, without any ceremony, in mass graves. The mortality was, particularly at the beginning, enormously high. By September 1945 1100 out of 1600 of the occupants of the camp had died.

When the kitchen had been fitted up, the food got better, particularly during the first 14 days. Then corruption gained the upper hand, particularly in the kitchen. The result was, that the quality and quantity of the food got continually worse and led to a general debility among the inmates of the camp.

Then Fila and Ulbrich soon died, as they were not able to recuperate, owing to the low diet.

After 6 weeks' quarantine the inmates of the camp had to go to work, if they were capable of doing this. For this they received a 200 grammes extra allowance of bread.

I managed to keep going until September, by selling my clothes to Russians, and buying bread for the money. The general state of health had become so bad in July, that work was stopped in the town and in the steelworks. Meanwhile some of us 15 men had gone to a better world. All of them, owing to the same causes, exhaustion, diarrhoea, accompanied by dropsy coming from hunger, and resultant weakness of the heart. By 26. July 1945 there were only 5 of us 15 men still living, August, a farmer of Paulskirch, May, Sitte and myself.

On the 25. July the first transport went back home, but unfortunately consisted only of Poles and Upper Silesians Nevertheless, everyone had new hopes. It was also said, that the rest, about 250 men, were to go immediately afterwards. However, hoping and holding out made fools of almost all of us in this case. The fact, that the internal administration of the camp, up to then had consisted almost entirely of Poles, and now passed into the hands of the Germans, led to a deteriotation of the food situation because of even more racketeering.

The Russians were indeed quite correct towards us, and sometimes very generous, however, they did nothing to stop the corruption. They too participated even in it themselves, particularly 3 lady doctors, who continually misappropriated the property of the sick and the dead.

August also died in August 1945, after he had very bravely held out up to then.

On the 18. September 1945 the camp (No. 1236) at Alschewsk was suddenly closed, and 150 men were transferred to a camp near Makejewka, 200 kilometres more to the west, and in the coal-field district of the Donez; among these men were all the 4 survivors of Trebnitz. Things here were the same as in most of the camps. There was corruption and racketeering everywhere. The accommodation, however, was much worse. I got weaker and weaker, and terribly thin. Therefore, my artificial limb no longer fitted me, so that the stump got hopelessly sore in November 1945, and I had to go into the hospital on the 20. May had been in the hospital before, and had come from there to a convalescent home.

On the 11. December 1945 73 men were sent home unfit for work. Sitte and I were among them. The transport took until the 31. December 1945, and ended in Frankfurt on the Oder. I myself was in an ambulance car in the train, and during the 3 weeks' journey 53 men died, and were thrown out of the train. As many people died, there was plenty of food in this car, so that I kept going. Almost all the occupants were sick with diarrhoea who died, but I remained lying there because of my leg. I was, therefore, often able to give Sitte bread and soup. However, he rarely took what I had left, and I suppose this was because of his increasing weakness

We were all discharged in Frankfurt, except those of us who were not able to walk, and these came into a prisoners' hospital, from which we were to be sent, at the latest after 8 days, to a hospital in Magdeburg or Dessau. As a result of 3 men in my room getting spotted fever, and having to be quarantined, we remained there for another 5 weeks. The food was indescribably bad, and the corruption of the personnel was shocking. After having received new clothes from the Russians for our discharge, this personnel took these away from us, and then gave us rags for our discharge from the hospital. Mortality was high in the hospital solely duo to underfeeding. Much of this would have been avoided, if the Russian supervisors had taken action.

I was finally discharged on the 5. February from Frankfurt

On the 6. February I arrived on crutches in Berlin, and the people there, in spite of their own great need, rendered us admirable help. On the 6. February I came to the English reception camp in Staaken, and from there with a transport on the 9. February to Munsterlager, where I arrived on the 11.

On the 12. February I was brought with a truck transport to Brunswick, where I was finally discharged.

Here I came to relatives, and received news from my dearest ones, who were in Bavaria.

While in Brunswick, I went into the hospital for 3 weeks to have my leg treated, and also to get my health better, for I weighed only 104 pounds. On the 15. March 1946 I finally started, without transit permit for the frontier, on my way to my family in the American zone near to Passau, and I reached them unexpectedly on the 18. March 1946.

Here I heard, that our last comrade Sitte had died in Germany, as the result of underfeeding, so that I and May, who was still living in Russia in December 1946, were the only survivors of us 15 men. Up to the present date nothing more has been heard of May.

No. 160

Eyewitness report of Ilse Lau of Zandersfelde,
district of Marienwerder in West Prussia
Original without date.

Forced deportation by way of Soldau to the South Ural. Conditions of life and work in coal mining.

The 31. December 1944 was the last New-Year's Eve, which we had at home. The whole family was together. On the 22. January 1945 our flight began by way of Weissenberg and Dirschau to Polish territory. In Schöneck we had three beautiful weeks, on the flight, which I shall never forget. I worked as receptionist with the ear specialist, in the military hospital in charge of Dr. Gramsch.

Our first meeting with the Russians was on the 11. March in Schönwalch close to the Baltic. Daddy was led away, and is said to have been shot the same day. We remained free for two days, kept in hiding and were not raped.

On the 13. March 1945 our fate overtook us in Krussen, in the district of Stolp. After endless cross-examination mummy was allowed to go home, Gert and I remained imprisoned. After six long marches we reached Konitz, where we were at first quartered in the penitentiary. From there we went to Soldau.

On the 7. April 1945 we were put in the train for Russia. Lena Gorda, Waltraut U.[435]) and Ilse Kohtz were with me. Ilse Kohtz died in August 1945, I was separated from Lena and Waltraut.

On the 28. April 1945 I was detrained at the camp of Korken in the South Ural. We were all of us ill and weak, for the food on the journey had been utterly inadequate. On the 9. May the Russian captain told us, that the war was at an end. What difference would that make to us prisoners? Would we return home sooner, or should we have to do years of forced labour? The latter is what happened.

On the 13. May 1945 I was sent to work on a collective farm. There life was more bearable than in the large camp of Korken, where there were about 3000 prisoners. We worked in the potato-fields from sunrise to sunset. Every German farmer would have rejoiced over the good and rich soil. Although the potatoes there only took three months to grow and get ripe, they were splendid. The food on the collective farm was comparatively good, and we were well treated. We got rid of vermin, because we could keep ourselves clean. We began to feel like human beings, but this was not to last long.

On the 6. July 1945 at 9 o'clock in the evening we had to pack all our things. A truck appeared and went with us the whole night through the locality. We had been told, that we were going home. We landed, however, at the colliery near Tscheljabinsk, in the South Ural. As a result of the official medical examination, I was put into category 1, and could, therefore, be put on underground work in the mines.

On the 12. July I went for the first time into the pit. It is a strange feeling to be suddenly 120 metres beneath the earth. Around us everything was dark, there was only one electric bulb for lighting the lift. We lit our miners lamps, and then began working. All the pits had their numbers. The pit, in which I had my baptism of fire was pit "42 bis". It was by far the worst pit. There was water everywhere on the ground of the mine gallery. If one stepped carelessly from the rails, on which the coal trucks were pushed along, one got wet up to the knees, but even to wet feet we became accustomed. I had comparatively easy work in pit "42 bis". I was gallery girl, that is to say, I had to keep the channels clean, in order to prevent the water collecting too much. Further, I had to clear away wood refuse and such-like things.

Our food consisted of soup and gruel three times a day and of 1200 grammes of bread. The bread alone kept us going, that is the reason that those, who worked on the surface, gradually broke down, because they only received 500 grammes of bread a day. I shall never forget in my life, how I liked eating dry bread.

I worked for two months in this pit. Then typhoid broke out in the camp and we were quarantined, that is to say, we were not allowed to go out to work, and every day were given a horribly painful injection. Further, we were every third day deloused. Lice were our continual guests. The whole day we searched our heads and clothes for them. When the commission discovered anyone with lice, the person in question immediately had his hair shorn. I not only had to thank my cleanliness but also my luck for the fact, that I never lost my hair. Temporary lice visitors were found on everyone. In October the medical commission released us for work. There were considerably fewer of us, and we had to be distributed among five pits in the neighbourhood.

My new place of work was in pit 43. The pit was far more modern than the other one, but demanded much more of us workers. The pitmaster knew how to exploit people. He treated the Russians and us prisoners both in the same way, but we were all of us not to be envied. One was only allowed to leave the dark hole after finishing one's "norm". It happened, that we sometimes had to remain as much as 16 hours down in the pit. When we had finally finished our work by summoning up our last strength, we were not allowed to go up in the lift, but had to climb up the ladders (138 metres).

We were often near to desperation. We were never able to sleep enough, and we were always hungry. It is clear, that the more the body is called upon to do, the more it needs. We earned no money, and our clothes were falling to pieces. Practically no one had received post from home, and we were getting tired of life. On the 18. December 1946 I got my first card from Meta, and cried like a little child. There was then someone waiting for me at home, and I must now pull myself together.

In January 1947 things had got so far, that we could no longer master our work. It was then my job to fill the coal trucks, and push them a short distance to the gallery, from where they were dragged away by the electric bus. I had no more strength, and I was beginning to calculate, how long it would be before my hour had come.

Then the order was issued, that the money we earned was no longer to be paid to the officers of the camp, but that the pit-workers were to receive their money personally. Every month 140 roubles were paid in taxes to the camp. One could not expect to be given gratis the glorious wooden bunk, the straw sack and the light. The Russians hoped, that by paying out in cash more work would be done. And this actually happened. The more I worked, the more I earned and the more I could eat. Unfortunately we soon earned too much for the Russians, and the rate of pay was reduced. From 1947 we were able to buy bread, potatoes, butter, meat and everything. Bread and potatoes were within our means.

A bucket of potatoes cost from 10—15 roubles, and a kilogramme of bread 3.3 roubles. We got so far at the beginning, that we ate as much as 3 kilogrammes of bread a day. The chief thing for us was the quantity and not the quality.

I then became friends with a girl named Margot. All my friends up to now, Ilse Kohtz of Zandersfelde, Jutta Krause, who was a high school girl of Mohrungen, and Klärchen Struck of Stolp, had died. Since I was together with Margot, my standard of life rose. We did our housekeeping together, the one of us who worked at nights was the manageress and cook. One of us could always live for a month in peace. When we had fed ourselves up a little, we began to buy blouses, a woollen skirt, stockings and such like things. We did not want to be beggars forever.

Margot worked as mate of the driver of the electric bus, and I had become a carrier of pit-props. A comrade and myself had to fetch the wood, which the miners needed for supporting the galleries. It was often very hard work, and it was not so simple to drag poles 2 1/2 metres long and which were very thick through a tunnel, which was low and 100 metres or more long, the tunnel itself being only 1 metre high. It was impossible to get the Russian women to do this work. The German girls were, of course, not asked, and if the work was not done well, this was reported to the camp. The result: sabotage and prison.

In the course of time I had so accustomed myself to the dragging of wood, that I did not want to do any other kind of work, more especially so as the pay was not bad. I received about 500 roubles a month in cash. I could have lived very well from the money, if I had earned it every month. But I was very ill: inflammation of the lungs, malaria and contusions, while working often caused me to have to go into hospital. Then I received no money and had to live from my small savings Margot always remained well and, if she had not looked after me so faithfully, my lot would have been a sorry one. If one was ill for any length of time, one did indeed get some food from the camp, but this was too much to die of and too little to live on.

On the 21. July 1949 I had my last accident in the pit. Through the contusions I developed an inflammation of the cellular tissues, and this kept me in bed for 4 months.

On the 19. November 1949 I was then really ripe for going home, and was put into a transport of soldiers from Tscheljabinsk. On the 16. December 1949 our transport arrived in Friedland. Then I had to pass through the hospitals of Göttingen, Bahlburg and Juist. 4 wonderful weeks in Wangerooge followed. Everywhere everyone did all they could for me. It is really lovely to be free again and back home.

No. 166

Eyewitness report of Gertrude Schulz of Willenberg,
district of Marienburg in West Prussia
Original. Summer 1946.

Meeting with the Russians on the flight, taken prisoners and cross-examinations, forced deportation by way of Graudenz to the North Ural: transport, work, return because of being incapable of working

The authoress reports at the beginning, that she tried to flee to Pomerania, and finally had to make a detour to the rural district of Danzig, and that she remained here, until the Russians came on the 8. March 1945.

We were in a pocket without knowing it. The Russian infantry passed through our village on its advance to Danzig. The Russians looked first of all for German soldiers, then stole our watches and other jewellery, and raped women young and old alike. This continued a week up to the 16. March 1945. Even at night we had no peace, because all doors had to remain open. Holding flashlight torches and pistols, they came into our houses at night. Everything was smashed up, which the Russians or the Poles did not steal. That was the first week, then all Germans up to 60 years of age, who were capable of working, had to go and repair the streets under the supervision of a Russian lieutenant and Russian foremen.

On the 23. March 1945 a Russian commissar came to the place, where about 200 Germans were working, and I was taken prisoner by the Russians with many other women and girls. We were driven like a herd of cattle at a run before the horse and cart of the commissar, who had a Pole as interpreter and coachman.

After 3 kilometres, we landed in the village of Hoppendorf, where the prisoners were collected in the village inn. There we were cross-examined by the commissar with the assistance of a Polish interpretess. This went on for 3 days, as there were about 300 prisoners there. Then on the 26. March 1945 we were cross-examined for the second time, 50 people in turns by 3 different commissars. We were questioned on the smallest details. In particular they wanted to compel us all to admit, that we had been members of the Party, to which they reckoned even the National Socialist People's Welfare Organization (NSV) and the Anti-Aircraft Union, which were the only organizations, to which I had belonged. The Polish interpretess did not believe this, and in the course of the first cross-examination had entered me up in the questionaire as having belonged to the "Women's League" (Frauenwerk). A young commissar, who was a great hater of the Germans, cross-examined me, the elder ones were more humane. When he put the question: "Frauenwerk?", I answered in the negative. Thereupon he became so enraged, that he beat me with a stick, until I was black and blue, I received about 15 blows with a stick on my left upper arm, on my back and on my thigh. I collapsed and, as in the case of the first cross-examination, I had to sign the questionaire, and was then taken away by a guard to an attic, where I was found completely exhausted and unable to move, by a cousin of mine Hilde Engelbrecht Pettelkau.

After 3 days, on the 30. March, we were driven 18 kilometres further to Strippau. It was Good Friday. There we were again thoroughly searched, even empty bottles being taken away from us. We remained, on the Saturday, the 31. March, lying on the cement floor of the stable. Up to then our food had consisted of a plate of soup daily. When we were herded together to proceed further, I found my cousin Ursula Engelbrecht and my niece Doris Engelbrecht. On Easter morning, April 1., we walked together in the direction of Graudenz, whereas my other cousin was discharged. She had with her an identity card from Prague[430]).

In the evening we arrived in Preussisch Stargard. We were accommodated in a three storey private house, and I was put into a shoe-maker's workshop. Abaut 20 women lay for the night on nails and bits of leather or on the table. The next morning, April 2. 1945, we went further as far as Neuenburg, there we were accommodated in a barn outside the town. We lay on rolls of pressed straw.

The next day, the 3. April, we arrived at Graudenz. The bridge over the Vistula had been repaired for pedestrians. We had gone 120 kilometres in three days, and had been twice wet through to the skin. On the prison yard our names were called out, and we were divided into groups. All the windows of the building were full of the heads of people, who wanted to see, if they could discover acquaintances among the new arrivals. I got separated from all my relatives and acquaintances. We were then put into cells in the cellar, 20 women in each cell, and the door was locked. A wooden bunk and an iron bedstead were all that we found in the cell. The windows had no panes of glass After 3 days the guards gave us straw sacks, as we were huddled together on the cement floor. Our food consisted of a pound of bread and a plate of watery soup for each of us; we ate this at long tables in the yard of the prison.

Every day we saw fresh crowds of prisoners come in at the gate, and long rows going out again. After two weeks on April 24., it was our turn. We went through the destroyed town to the railway station. There we were loaded into cattle trucks, 40 persons in each, on each side of the truck there were 2 storeys. A tiny window let just a little air in, the doors were bolted from outside. We had to suffer severely from filth, thirst and vermin. In 1½ days we had soup once, some dried bread, a tablespoonful of sugar and some coffee. Once the train stopped at a small pond. There we were allowed to wash ourselves, after not having done so for 3 weeks. With the exception of 2 dead, 1200 women and 800 men arrived on the 1. May in Karpinsk, which was our destination in the Siberian Ural, of which the latitude is 65°. We were not allowed to leave the wagon till the next day on the 2. May.

The road to the camp was 3 kilometres long, and led over a swampy meadow. In the camp we were allotted to the huts in groups. Some of us began to clean up the huts, others were already being cross-examined, and their baggage again searched. Then we had to go to the camp doctor, but first of all to the barber. This was on the 3. Mai. Anyone who had lice was at once closely shaved. Stark naked we had to appear before the lady doctor and the commandant, who put us into labour categories, according to our physical condition. I came to 1. Batt., 2. Comp., 7. Squad, sub-group 3. Our leaders were German men, who spoke Polish. There were also some women among them. The camp had been previously a Russian penal camp for soldiers. Our guards and officers, and also the lady doctor were members of the Red Army, who had formely been condemned to punishment.

At 5.30 in the morning we were woken up by a siren. Then the squads, in each of which were 80 persons, fetched half a litre of soup and 200 grammes of bread for each person. At 7 o'clock the work began. The categories 1 and 2 went to the pit, dug deep trenches, dragged beams for railway building etc., I was in category 3, because of a scar, which I had as the result of a gall-stone operation. We either had to go to the railway station to fetch food, or to the forest. We were given 8 large loaves in a sack or 40 pounds of cereals. We went in fours, drawn up in ranks, through the swampy meadow. We often also fetched boards from the saw-mill. Two women had to carry on their shoulders three planks, 5 metres long, on top of one another. If they could not do it, then they were helped with blows from rifle-butts, before a third woman was fetched. 4 guards supervised one squad. We fetched in pairs trunks of birch trees from the wood. The distance was 2½ kilometres, and sometimes we went three times. In group 4 were the weak and sickly. They had to clean the huts and do sewing for the hospital.

We were counted every evening. Every day 8 to 10 died, but in the coal-pit camp even as many as 15 to 25. At midnight the corpses were brought naked on stretchers into the forest, and put into a mass grave. At all the four corners of the camp fence there were sentry turrets with large search lights, which were on the whole night. The days were very long there, and it was really the land of the midnight sun.

On Sundays our working hours were a little shorter, and ended at 5 o'clock in the afternoon. Then catholics and protestants assembled at 18 o'clock in one of the huts for divine service. Often a commissar came and shouted out: "That won't help you". He then left us with the interpretess. I found my niece Doris Engelbrecht in group 2. We were in the same camp until July, then she came, before I did, to another camp.

On the 15. July it was announced, that 300 Germans would have to go, and work for the owner of a peat-bog. We were first of all given injections against typhoid. In a week we came to the camp of Pjerwomaisk. There we were allowed to wash ourselves thoroughly, were deloused and again innoculated. The camp was 2 kilometres from the town of Nanetka, and had a latitude of 60 degrees.

We were divided into detachments of 25 persons, and were guarded by Russian civilians. There were endless peat-bogs all around. The presses were running day and night. We had to walk 4 kilometres to our work, and we also had to work, when it was raining. But we had no place for drying our clothes and shoes.

In July and August it was very hot there, and it was almost impossible to work for 14 hours. We never got back to the hut from supper before 10 o'clock. The food was much worse. We received 600 grammes of bread a day as in the first camp, but only very thin soup, this was generally potato-water with cut-up cabbage leaves, or the peel of beet-roots with a few noodles. In the afternoon there were also three tablespoonfuls of gruel, consisting chiefly of millet, and for a short time a teaspoonful of smoked goat meat.

The work of peat cutting by hand was chiefly unpleasant, because the skin easily got sore and rashes broke out, as we had no water to wash, and soap did not exist there. We remained so late in the field, that it was no longer possible to distinguish between the ground and the peat. Then we put stumps of wood on our shoulders and went home. This latter was fire wood for the guards and gun-women, who guarded the camp. Among them were horrible people, who tyrannized over us in every conceivable way. We hardly dared to stand upright, for fear of being hit with rifle-butts.

On the second day in this camp I had fearfully swollen legs, and could scarcely walk. In the afternoon I was allowed to remain in the hut. The lady doctor of the camp came with the nurse, who spoke good German, to visit the sick. I was immediately put into the hospital. Whereas in the huts we lay on wood, in the hospital there were camp beds with straw sacks. But also here there were no rugs, and at night we had to cover ourselves with our mantles. My dropsy had got worse by the morning, and the upper part of my body and my face were awfully swollen. The lady doctor gave me three injections of coffeine, and this gave me a little relief, but as I could hardly breathe, I often sat at night in front of the hut, as I could not get my breath inside. But the air outside was very unhealthy because of the mist. The result was, that after three weeks I got rheumatism in my knees and feet. The lady doctor took great trouble with me, and I received very much medicine. I was discharged after 6 weeks with 2 weeks light duty.

During this time the camp lieutenant assigned me for night guard duty, which was done by women, not capable of doing full duty; the duty lasted from 10 to 2 o'clock, and from 2 o'clock to 6 o'clock. We had to march up and down in front of the huts, and control our own compatriots. Every night a lieutenant came through the four long huts to count the people. The night guards had to accompany him and answer all his questions, concerning places which were not occupied.

During the day I had to clean huts, and fetch 15 buckets of water for washing from the pump. In addition to this, I had to bring 6 buckets of boiled drinking water into the camp from the village. For this purpose there was a little hut with two large water boilers, which were connected with the heating, and this was all looked after by an old Russian woman.

After the period of "light duty", I had already been two weeks again at peat cutting, when a medical commission from outside suddenly arrived. They examined the reconvalescents, who were not yet on full work. Thanks to the lady doctor of our camp I was among those who were to return home. We were again twice cross-examined, and an identity card was filled out for each of us. I then had to do another two days of peat cutting, and on 4. October we departed for the railway station in Nanetka. Our German comrades watched us with tears, as we went through the camp gate. 30 of us huddled in the wagon, waited 6 days with the rations, which we had with us, until we were finally coupled to a military transport train. Each of us had been given 5 pounds of small frozen potatoes, some flour, dried bread and some sugar. In spite of the high snow, we looked for wood outside, in order to make a fire, and so to cook water soup, made with flour in our tins.

On the 10. October the journey continued to Swerdlowsk, the capital of the Ural. There it was found out, that the leader of the transport had our identity cards and had not come with the train. The Russian captain, who was in charge of the hospital train, could not take us further, as there was not food enough. We were, therefore, shunted onto a dead-end track. After two days, on the 2. October, our men succeeded in prevailing on the railway police to contact our camp. Then the officer, who had to accompany us, appeared on the third day. The result was, that by the 14 October food had been obtained for us, and we were later coupled on to the next transport. Occasionally we got bread from hospital trains, which passed through with German soldiers, this bread was then distributed amongst all our comrades.

The transport then proceeded to Dünaburg by way of Kasan, Gorki, Jaroslawl, Welikie Luki and passed Ilmensee. From there we went by way of Kovno and Tilsit to Königsberg, which we reached on the 6. November. Here we remained three days, and had to clean wagons, which Russian soldiers had left in a filthy condition. As far as Königsberg the tracks had had broad gauge, but we now came into wagons on narrow gauge, this was on the 9. November.

We travelled from Ponarth to Preussisch Eylau, there our train was taken over by Polish railway personnel We now went by way of Korschen, Allenstein, Deutsch Eylau and Thorn. The journey through East Prussia alone lasted 14 days. It often happened, that people, who had got out to get water, could not get in again, because we were neither informed of how long the stop would be, nor when we should proceed further.

We met transports containing Germans, who were on their way to Russia.

Our food during the whole six weeks consisted of cut-up beet-roots and bad oil, dry bread, and every third day a salted herring. In our wagon we had a little iron stove, for which we had to seek wood and coal at the railway stations. There we often saw the unburied corpses of German soldiers lying about, and who had been in previous transports.

Since the journey to Allenstein, I felt very ill again. I could no longer eat, my bowels and stomach were in a very bad state, and in addition to that I had awful pains in my joints. I thought I should soon die. We finally reached our destination, Frankfurt-on-Oder, on the 20. November. I could scarcely move a foot, and two women helped me to the truck, which brought the weakest of us to the barracks.

In addition to myself and about 10 German soldiers, there were also women and girls with their children, who had been born on the journey, these were to go further. The rest walked to a camp, and German medical orderlies attended to us. We were allowed to have a shower-bath, and our clothes were deloused. The next day we were put into a transition hospital. There we lay on the floor on straw, but without covering. The poor victims of the deportation were dying to the right and left of me.

After summoning up all my strength, I was allowed to proceed to Berlin, the journey lasted 7 hours, and we arrived there on the 26. November. 5 days had passed, and we were then examined in the refugee camp, at the railway station "Schlesischer Bahnhof". From there I was transferred to the camp at Neukölln. The camp doctor ordered me to be transferred to a hospital, this was on the 28. November. Two days long I dragged myself from one hospital to another. I finally succeeded, on the 1. December, in being taken in by the Gertrauden Hospital in Berlin-Wilmersdorf.

The diagnosis was, after a thorough examination which was made on the 1. December: cardiac weakness, heart-dropsy, bronchitis, articular rheumatism, stomatitis, scurvy, danger of dysentry and inflammation of the nerves. After six weeks I got suppuration of the jaws, and furuncles in my ears and nose. When I was taken in at the hospital, I only weighed 39 kilo.

The authoress closes her report with some remarks about her recovery.

No. 169

Eyewitness report of the tailoress Anna Schwartz of Schönberg,
district of Karthaus in West Prussia
Attested copy. 5. June 1952.

Entry of the Russian troops into Danzig, arrest and deportation by way of Graudenz to the South Ural: transport, different kinds of work, conditions of life from 1945 to 1948

On the 27. March 1945 the Russians marched into Danzig For days before the town had been a sea of flames, for days the bombs of aeroplanes and the shells of artillery had been bursting over us, and for days we had been living in air-raid shelters in fear of the future.

Russian loud-speakers, which had been erected on the walls of the town, kept calling upon the citizens of Danzig to capitulate. They were promised freedom and safety, and the announcements were accompanied by the most beautiful waltzes of Strauss. However, we did not believe all this, and prepared for the worst. Everyone used any chance possible to get out of this hell. However, the departing ships offered no guarantee for escape, as most of them were sunk. The German soldiers, fighting in Danzig, were confronted with the same fate as we were, that is to say, either to die or to be taken prisoner. Many men and women committed suicide, in order not to fall into the hands of the Russians.

On the 27. March, in the early morning, the shooting stopped. In the following calm we heard the Russian panzer rolling in, and the first cheers of the Russian soldiers. Shortly afterwards Russian soldiers were heard coming down the steps of the cellar. The first Russian soldiers stood in front of us, and the first word we heard from them was: "Urr"! "Urr!" There was a stink of alcohol, sweat and dirty uniforms. After they had robbed us of our watches, with machine-pistols in their hands, they hastily disappeared into the next cellar, and did the same there. After five minutes the next two came, and so it continued, until we had no more jewellery, and the contents of our trunks had been turned upside down.

In the meanwhile we heard the shrieks of women, who were being raped by Mongols. Suddenly a Russian officer appeared, and called upon us in broken German, to leave the cellar at once. As quickly as we could, we took hold of our trunks and rucksacks, which had been searched over and over again, and rushed into the yard, which was full of guns and soldiers. All around the houses were burning, shells were exploding, and German low-flyers were attacking; wounded people and horses were screaming, and through this confusion we tried to make our way into the open. Paying no heed to the death around us, we went past burning houses, Russian panzer, guns and soldiers, who absolutely wanted to drag us into the houses.

When we had gone a distance, there was more room, but to our horror we saw Russian sentries in the street, who plundered our baggage. After taking everything they liked the look of, we were allowed to go further on. We, however, did not get far. Further on, there was a large detachment of

Russian troops, who then took us prisoner. Two sentries, with fixed bayonets, brought us seven Germans to a farm in the neighbourhood; here there were already a great number of German men and women. We were brought to the loft of the house, had to seek room to sit down, and received a good meat soup. In the course of the afternoon, continually more prisoners came. We were guarded by sentries. In a state of terror, we waited for what was to happen.

We were cross-examined in the night by the commissars and were asked, if we had belonged to the Party, what our occupations were, our ages, etc. A Ukrainian interpreter translated. The next morning the sun was shining brightly, and we marched off to a farm at Zuckau, which is about 22 kilometres from Danzig. There we were all put, men and women together, into a potato cellar. There were again cross-examinatons and recordings. We received a small portion of soup once a day. After 3 days we proceeded back to Danzig, conducted by guards with fixed bayonets. When we had arrived at Danzig-Langfuhr, we were put into the stables of the previous cavalry barracks of Hochstriess. There were again cross-examinations, and various individuals were called up by name. They were brought out by guards, we heard shots, and they did not come back. We assumed, that the Poles had accused these Germans of something.

I remember Good Friday 1945 very well. About 400 women were standing and lying in a very small space on the bare cement floor, just as the horses had left it. The wind and cold came through the windows, which had no panes. We were tormented by thirst, but were given nothing to eat or drink. The women were crying about their children, from whom they had been torn away. We were in great despair, and in our misery we sang the songs: "Have patience my soul", "Out of my deep need I call to Thee" and "I pray to the Power of Love". I had never before been so moved by singing, even the Russians stood before the door and listened. It was clear to us all, that our time of suffering had commenced. I uttered a few fearsome words to my sister, who sonsoled me by saying: "We have not left God, and He will not leave us". These words later on brought me consolation, and afforded me strength during the time of my hardest sufferings.

Early the next day all the women were driven into the yard, were called up, according to the records, and prepared for the march to Graudenz. My sister and I were separated, and we could not even take leave of one another. I asked the sentry to allow me to go to my sister, in order to say goodbye, but he only answered with an oath. We men and women, who had been called up, numbered about 500, and we came into another stable where we had more room, but it was even dirtier than the first one. As far as possible, each one made a place clean for lying down, and thus we passed the last night in Danzig.

The next morning we were all chased out, drawn up in fours and counted. One girl had poisoned herself during the night. After we had been given something to eat, our march of misery began, to Graudenz which was 130 kilometres away. On the way we met haggard old people, carrying with difficulty the last few things they had saved. One picture I shall never forget, and this confronted us, when we were passing through a suburb of Danzig.

The inhabitants had been driven into a cemetery, exposed to the wind and the cold, women with their children, aged and sick people with their bundles were standing among the graves, and at the beginning of this April, it was very cold. As I heard later, they remained there for days, because they were not allowed to go back to their dwellings. In front of the houses there were all kinds of domestic utensils, and now and then one saw a haggard man or woman running across the street.

We were accompanied by about 20 heavily armed guards. Every day we had to go 30 kilometres. We passed the night in a cowshed or sheepfold. Once a day we were given watery soup, but only half a litre. The worst was the thirst, which we had to suffer. We drank out of every puddle, to which we could get near, and it is no wonder, that dysentry broke out amongst us. We were only allowed to rest 10 minutes at the end of every 10 kilometres. One young girl jumped from a bridge into the water, the guards shot wildly at her, and I saw her sink. A young man, who had heart-disease, jumped into the Vistula. He was also shot. The fourth day we could hardly move further. Thirst was such a torture, and we were so tired. Many had got open sores on their feet from walking, and had bound them up with rags. Two weeks long we had not been able to wash ourselves, nor change our clothes. The mental suffering and the hardships had made us years older. Anyone, who could not go further, was loaded onto farmcarts, which were behind us, and brought to Graudenz.

The fourth day we reached Graudenz, totally exhausted. The first night we were put into a private house. It was frightful. All around there were lying sick and dying people, and no one troubled about them. The next day we were delivered into a military prison. I came with 14 other women into a dark little cell in the cellar. We sat on the damp cold cement floor, and in whispers asked one another our names, and where we came from. We came from East Prussia, West Prussia and Pomerania. We had a dying woman in our cell, and another one, whose arm had been broken by blows. Twice a day we were brought into the yard, and drawn up in fours with our hands behind our backs, in this way we were brought out to receive our food and go to the closet.

The food consisted of a litre of watery soup, in which there were oats, barley, bits of potatoes and sand; it also had a taste of automobile oil. The closet consisted of a long deep trench, over which boards had been laid at intervals. One had to be very careful how one stepped, for one could easily fall into the trench. Near this closet was the cemetery. During the day deep trenches were dug, in which the dead were buried at night.

Finally we were allowed to bath, not in a bath but under shower-baths. We were shocked, when we saw, that all the Russian attendants were men. Every Russian, who wanted to see naked women, came into this bathing place. Whilst we were bathing, our clothes were deloused next door, for we had a good supply of lice. The Russians, however, did not molest us.

After 10 days we were brought to the goods station, where dark and dirty cattle-trucks were waiting for us. 40 to 50 women were put into each wagon, into which a very little light came through tiny latticed windows. We removed a nail, which was in the wall of the wagon, and made the hole a little bigger, so that we were able to look out with one eye. The last beautiful thing I saw in my home, was a blossoming cherry tree.

The journey lasted 18 days, and the train rushed day and night with its human freight towards the east. In Moscow we had to bath and were deloused, good articles of clothing were stolen from us by the female attendants. Then we proceeded further, tormented by thirst, especially those of us who were ill. Once a day we received soup, made of beet cuttings, 3 packets of crisp bread and a teaspoonful of sugar. We became more and more depressed, our thoughts were either back in the past, or occupied with the future. The nights kept getting colder, and one day we saw snow, when the door was opened. We were horrified, and began to talk about Siberia. But it took another 5 days, until we reached our destination, and then we were really in Siberia, although it was the western part.

When we got out, most of us fell down as we were so weak. The sick were carried by the stronger, and our miserable column staggered the short distance to the camp. 200 men and women had already died on the journey, but now the dying really began.

The huts, in which we were quartered, were full of filth and vermin, swarms of bugs overwhelmed us, and we destroyed as much of this vermin as we could. We lay on bare boards so close together, that, if we wanted to turn round, we had to wake our neighbours to the right and left of us, in order that we all turned round at the same time. The sick people lay amongst us, groaning and in delirium No one ever laughed or made a joke. The sick people were finally taken into a hospital, this hospital was a big empty room, and they had to make the place, where they lay down, clean with a towel or a rag. Anyone who had a rug was lucky, because he could put it on the ground and lie on it, or cover himself up with it.

In the camp were 640 women and about 1760 men. There was practically no water, but a camel had to fetch water from a village, which was 3 kilometres away. We had not been able to wash ourselves for weeks, but Germans built a main, and we had water.

A Russian lady doctor looked after our camp, and was very much respected by us, because of her kindness and readiness to help. She had neither medicaments nor instruments, but saw that the sick people received bunks, straw sacks and personnel to look after them. Typhoid and dysentry raged and very many died, but death meant rather release than terror to them. The dead were brought into a cellar, and when this was full up to the top, it was emptied. Meanwhile the rats had eaten from the corpses, and these very quickly decayed, as during the months of July and August the heat was very great. At night our camel, which fetched our bread during the day, brought the dead in the same cart a kilometre away to mass graves in the steppes, into which the dead men and women were thrown. A guard stood by shouting out: "Get on quickly." Also the wolves satisfied their hunger. There was neither tree nor shrub at the graves, and not even a bird sang its song to the quiet sleepers; only the wind from the steppes howled over the graves.

Also the survivors had death-like faces. Always having the same kind of poor food, and the climate which was most hard for us to bear, caused us great suffering. During the first weeks, we were given three times a day unshelled millet in water, boiled with a very little fat, and in addition to that 800 grammes of bread The bread was horrible, very sour and moist It was made of wheat, oats and barley, with the addition of ground chaff. Our gums and pallet soon began to get sore and bled, so that we could truly say, we ate our bread with tears.

I should now like to describe our camp to you: A large square piece of land with a barbed wire fence, 2 metres high. Within this fence, at a distance of 2 metres, there was another small barbed wire fence, and we were not allowed to go near it. At every corner, outside the fence, was a sentry turret, which was occupied by guards day and night. There was a searchlight outside, which lit up the whole camp at night time.

The men's and women's camps were separated by a barbed wire fence. The kitchen, the bathing building and the hospital for outside patients were in the men's camp. A sentry guarded the gate. In every hut there were 120 to 140 women crowded together. The high school mistress had to lie down next to the factory worker, the farmer's wife next to the woman from the town, the same lot united us all. We were really happy, when we discovered the face of someone we knew among the occupants of the huts.

During the first three weeks of our quarantine, we only had to do easy work, such as clearing up the huts, scrubbing the bunks, and sweeping the yard and paths. Every morning and evening we had to parade like soldiers. The officers, who had all been transferred for punishment, made us observe military discipline. This drilling often lasted hours. And, if it was raining, the officers took pleasure, in letting us stand outside a particularly long time, this often continued until nightfall. This was particularly hard, when it was frosty and cold·

After three weeks the commission came to examine us medically. We went by huts to the outside hospital, and had to strip ourselves naked; we then went one by one into the so-called consulting room. When we opened the door, we saw that the whole room was full of officers; this also upset us and caused tears, but that did not help, we had to go in naked. We were thankful, that our good Russian lady doctor was there, in addition to her, there were 5 or 6 officers. The latter laughed at our blushing, and also at our figures, which were distorted through our having got so thin. Some officers pinched our arms and legs, in order to test the firmness of the flesh. This occurred every three months. There were three labour categories: first, second and third, then there was another category for those, who were weak and convalescent. The latter category received somewhat better food, and only had to do quite easy work.

At the beginning of June we were put to work on a railway line, which was being begun, and which was to connect two nickel mines, which were about 25 to 30 kilometres spart. We women had to make embankments, and the men had to lay the sleepers and the rails. Everyone had a piece of ground measured off for him, and then we had to dig the earth out and pile it up into an embankment. Our foremen were Germans, who had been expelled from the Ukraine. They were good to us, for we were suffering the same lot. We soon had large blisters on our hands, for the spades bent with every thrust, and the heat was unbearable. Every two hours there was a ten minutes' rest. At midday a truck came, and brought us the thin water soup, which we were allowed to eat, and rest ourselves whilst so doing. Then we had to re-continue, but our hands hurt us so much, that we could hardly hold the spade, and were longing for breaking-off time. Our guards took care, that we stopped the work punctually. We reached the camp dead tired and with aching limbs, and we prayed God to give us strength for the next day

I did this work for 6 weeks, then I became convalescent. For 6 weeks I had been doing the same thing: working, eating, sleeping. We became apathetic, resigned to our fate, and like a herd of draught animals. On Sunday we did not have to work. Sunday, which had always been our nicest day at home, became the same in the camp. We could rest, mend our clothes, and talk about our relatives and our home, which latter had been burnt, laid waste and was lost for us.

A rumour spread in the camp, that we were going home. Everyone now began to have fresh courage and hope. A transport was indeed assembled, but only consisted of aged men and women and of weak and sick persons, who could hardly walk. It was very hard for us to take leave of these fellow sufferers We all shed tears, and wished them the best.

By the middle of August I had got a little better, and was sent with 30 other women to a collective farm, which was 35 kilometres from our camp. A truck brought us there, and the Russian driver drove, like all Russians, at a furious rate, whether the ground was rough, or uphill or downhill. We were all expecting to be killed, for the ground was very hilly

The next lines the authoress devotes to a description of the landscape, and then continues:

At night we were bitterly cold in our tents, which were full of holes. We were not fenced in there by barbed wire, but had only one guard, who did not trouble much about us. We also had better food, and could eat vegetables in the fields, but we often had to work as much as 16 hours a day, also on Sundays. During the whole time we could not once thoroughly wash ourselves. It was a long way from the field to the tent, and it was dark, before we got back. We all of us had lice in our hair and clothes, and we insisted upon being given a Sunday without work, in order to be able to bath in the little village, and to have our cloths and rugs deloused. The bathing and delousing stoves were looked after by a Russian woman, and were either only just warm, so that the lice multiplied, or so hot, that the contents of the delousing stove were burnt up·

All the women, in the meantime the number had increased to 150, returned to the camp in November. Only 7 remained for the winter on the collective farm, and I was among these 7. We lived and worked together with Ukrainians and Russians.

We 7 women had a small room with electric light, and the large stove such as is usual in Russia. We received our food from the common kitchen.

In the section which follows the authoress reports, how she passed her Christmas and New Year's Eve.

The year 1946 began, and we wondered, if we would return home during this year, but nothing seemed to indicate this. We 7 remained snowed-in on the collective farm, and had no contact with the camp, which was 50 kilometres away. Russians, who passed through, told us, there had been an accident in the camp. A locomotive had been derailed, and there were many dead and injured. We later heard, that fortunately no one had been killed, but that there had been several severely and slightly injured, particularly with bad burns. These were women, who in summer were brought to their work at the nickel-mines by trucks, and in winter by train. Through the usually mad speed, at which the truck and engine-drivers drove, many such an accident occurred. In the course of the cross-examinations which followed, the Germans, of course, were blamed, and they were even threatened with being put in prison.

If anyone's feet were frozen, the person in question was asked, "Why have you allowed your feet to get frozen?" No allowance was made for the fact, that these wretched people had to work in wooden shoes at a temperature between 30⁰ and 40⁰ below zero Centigrade. In the winter of 1945—1946 many a woman had her legs frozen, the shins got sore and covered with cracks, but there was no ointment or bandaging stuff available, with the result, that the pain became insupportable. Through the humanity of the director of the collective farm, who was himself an expellee from the Ukraine, we were given quilted jackets, quilted trousers, felt boots and fur caps in November 1945. On the other hand, in the camp only a few exceptionally good workmen preferentially received drill trousers and dirty old torn quilt jackets, which came from the German army. This first bad winter passed, but still more severe ones were to follow.

At the end of April a sleigh suddenly appeared at the door of the farm, with the camp commander and an officer, who had come to fetch me, as they had found out, that I was a tailoress. I was put in the tailor's workroom in the camp.

The authoress relates, how she took leave of her comrades, and also the friendly hospitality of Ukrainian farmers' wives; this she illustrates by examples.

On arriving at the camp, I observed that much had changed. There were new officers there, and fewer sentries, the latter were older, and had taken the place of the Communist youth, who had before guarded us. The previous camp commander had been put in prison, as he had misappropriated victuals, clothing and even sugar, which were for us. There was a new captain, who was indeed very severe but also very just. After a short time there came a special officer for culture and propaganda. Another officer, who was also very severe, was in charge of the workers, and many a German man was thrashed by him without any reason Whenever he appeared in the camp, everyone fled immediately into the huts.

The life in the camp had also changed. Every day we had to come on parade, and were counted over and over again, until the number was right; it was often hours, before we were allowed to go back into the huts. There were much fewer people in the camp, for over 1000 men and women had died, and many a dear comrade of mine was no longer among the living. From now onwards not so many died, for we had become accustomed to the climate and the food; nevertheless all the beds in the hospital were full; these were mostly those, who had met with accidents, while working, others suffering from malaria, and convalescents.

Two German army doctors, who came from the nearest prisoners of war camp, were in charge of the hospital. They worked unceasingly, and did all they could to help the sick. They succeeded in obtaining medicaments, bandaging material, and the most necessary surgical instruments. It was due to these 2 doctors, that many a mother kept her child. The sick people now had mattresses, everyone had a rug and better food. Also in the huts there were now straw sacks for everyone, the floor and the bunks were scrubbed, and in the women's camp there was a water main, so that we could wash ourselves every day; but we only received very little soap, monthly about 50 grammes, sometimes we were months without any.

The food was also somewhat better. It is true, that the bread was still moist and sour, but there was no longer a mixing of chaff in it. There was further an eating-room, which was also called a club. Outside on the wall of the house, there was placarded in large letters: "The Hitlers come and go, but the German people and the German state remain." At the place, where the food was served out, there was placarded up the motto: "He who will not work, shall have nothing to eat".

Eating was the chief topic. Those who were ever hungry counted the pieces of cabbage in their soup, rushed to collect crumbs of bread and fish bones, and even stole bread from their comrades. There were also some, who could not sleep, because of hunger, but who nevertheless did not beg for soup. The only ones, who were always satiated, were the kitchen women; they got visibly more plump, and were envied by the others. Twice a year there were, for a few weeks, bits of potatoes in the soup. Once in spring, when the potatoes were being sorted out for planting, then frozen and foul ones came into the camp, but during the harvest time we had the smallest from the size of peas to hazelnuts When the Russian cook had had no chance of stealing the potatoes allotted to the camp, then to our great joy and surprise we received thick potato soup. When there was no more salted cabbage, which we had to eat 3 times a day, the weak and those discharged from hospital had to go into the steppes to collect wild spinach and nettles. At the time, when the beets were raked out, trucks came with half-rotting leaves, which were then boiled up with herrings, just as they came out of the barrel. This was sometimes also done with stockfish. It was again the doctors, who had succeeded in persuading the officers and the cooks, to have herrings or fish distributed. After the new harvest we also sometimes received carrots or pumpkins in the form of thick soup. If we ever received any meat at all, it was either horse-meat or the heads and entrails of oxen. It even happened, that we received a piece of entrail with foeces still in it. Also a camel, which had broken its leg and had to be slaughtered, was also given us to eat. The flesh didn't taste bad, something like a tender piece of beef.

What did we do in our free time? Books, journals and newspapers, there were none, but we had permission from the commander of the camp, to organize a so-called Variety evening. There were men and women with good voices, who organized choirs. The women were called hut-crickets, and the men field mice. A little orchestra, which played well, gave concerts, and also music for dancing. There were also comic little stage plays, and even dances performed. The Russian officers came with their wives to these evenings, and if they liked a dance or piece of music, this had to be repeated several times. These performances were given almost every Saturday, by desire of the culture officer.

For the 1. May or the October Revolution, these performances had to be of a political kind. Then Russian songs were sung in German, and Russian music was played. We were even brought to the next village to go to the cinema. We went with delight and curiosity, but we came back very disappointed, for they had shown us a provocatory propaganda film, of the worst sort.

On Sunday we were brought to the bazaar. There one could buy everything, linen from Stenzil near Danzig, pianos, toothpaste, etc., everything had been robbed from East Germany. There were Cossacks there with bad tobacco, children with a waterglass, in which there were a few bonbons, Tartars with mutton and many other things. There were also in the crowd drunken Russians shouting out. Our sentries guarded us, as far as they could from the curiosity of the visitors of the bazaar, who crowded around us; they also saw, that when we bought anything, we did not have to pay more than the article was worth. Many of us had already sold clothing, in order to be able to purchase victuals with the money.

I suppose you would like to know, what work we did, and what wages we received. In autumn 1946 we were divided up into labour brigades, received our labour number and, as was said, we were put on the same footing as the Russian workers, and were to receive in cash what we earned. I will now tell you, what I earned for farm work. For between 12—14 hours. a day, I earned 8.40 roubles; for that I could buy two eggs or a half a litre of milk. The food in the camp cost a little more than 11 roubles, so that I owed the state daily almost 3 roubles. This sum was put down on my account as a debt. I came to the tailor's work-room with a mass of debts, and so it continued.

Our work consisted in sewing clothes for officers and their wives or their girl friends. This work was, however, not paid, and my debts increased. It was the same thing with the men, for there were only a few specialists, who received money. These men could buy themselves extra food. The men and women working in the nickel-mine earned for the hardest work hardly enough to pay for the food they consumed. The work in brickyards and on the roads was very hard, but badly paid. We were nothing but beasts of burden, on whom the Russians wanted to be revenged, whom they exploited and finally sent home, when they were totally incapable of working.

In August 1946 there was great rejoicing in the camp, because everyone received a card, and was allowed to write 25 words home. As we all no longer had any home, everyone wrote to relatives and friends in the Old

Reich. We then began waiting for answers, and we hoped, that we should at least by Christmas hear something from our relatives or friends. Some of us received an answer, but the majority continued to live in uncertainty.

I myself received the first news from my sister in the middle of April 1948.

The October Revolution was celebrated by two days rest. There was better food from products, which had been saved up Beforehand there was a severe checking in the camp. Knives, forks, jewellery and all that we had written was taken away from us. The number of sentries were increased, and we were more severely guarded. This was repeated on all national holidays.

Our second Christmas was approaching, and these were days of mental depression. We sang our beautiful Christmas songs, and made little presents of crochet and knitting work. In one hut there was even an advent wreath with 4 candles. Here is a description of it: It was a wreath, made of plaited grass from the steppes, and pieces of material of different colours filled with wadding, this we had taken out of our torn quilted jackets; this stuffed out material was hung on the wreath to represent balls. The candles consisted of small containers of oil, which had been saved from our daily ration, and which had a thread in them as wick. Everyone admired the wreath, and was happy about it. Unfortunately our contrivance burst into flames, when a light turned over, and we congratulated ourselves, that this was not seen by the sentries, for it could have caused the whole hut to burn down.

The year 1947 did not bring us our return home. Only sick and weak people were put into a transport. Again we took leave, and begged them not to forget us. We, who remained behind, had to continue hoping and and waiting.

In May 1947 I came with a number of other men and women to another camp. This camp was about 200 kilometres further north-west, and was immediately next to the Urals. The next town was Orsk. The camp in the next village was called Nickel. The climate was the same, but there were trees and bushes, and the camp was not so isolated. We met in the camp Germans from Transsylvania, Hungary, Romania, Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland The camp was so overcrowded, that for the first few days we had no place of our own for sleeping on. We lay down on the places, which became free, when our comrades had gone to work.

I was put to work with 18 other women at a big nickel factory, which was 3 kilometres away. We were brought by a sentry to the factory, there taken over by a supervisor, and brought into a room in the administrative building. There we were told by an interpreter, what kind of work we had to do, and how much we had to achieve.

We were then warned to be careful when working, and were told, that if we had an accident, it would be our own fault. I had to bring slag in a railway truck from the lift, and tip it into the furnace, I was helped by another woman. The heat was so great, that our hair and eye-brows were singed. The gasses took our breath away, and brought the tears into our eyes. We wore a protective suit of felt, felt boots and leather gloves against the sparks, which came out. Often tiny pieces of metal flew into our faces which were unprotected. Nickel ore, gypsum and slag were melted in this furnace.

We worked only 6 hours a day, and every 5 days there was a change in shift, and a free day. Although we had food of the first category, when doing this hard and unhealthy work, we were at the end of 5 months so weak, that we could hardly walk into the camp, and when the next medical commission came, we were put into work category no 3. I then was detailed to work with another woman in the open. We came to a transporting machine, and had to shovel sand, which was brought direct on a conveyor belt into a railway truck. In 3 months we had together filled five 60 ton wagons; by then the earth was frozen so hard, that it was no longer possible to work.

We then came to a place of work, which was the most terrible part of my captivity. The work began at 8 o'clock in the evening, and lasted 8 hours, until 4 o'clock in the morning. In almost pitch dark, we had to unload wagons, which arrived with coke, coal, and coal-waste. This coal came from far away, and was frozen in the trucks. The dredgers only unloaded the middle of the trucks; we had to clear the corners and sides with pick-axes, iron spikes, iron wedges and big hammers, in order to make the loading openings free. If we could not work quick enough with these tools, and our exhausted strenght, we then had to work with pneumatic drills. Our Russian guards stood by, and urged us on with blows and curses. On Christmas Eve 1947, and at a temperature of 38° below zero Centigrade, we unloaded 3 trucks of coal-waste during a snow-storm, and urged on by curses and kicks. We were not allowed to pause a moment, because the rails had to be free for the next transport. In spite of all this, our thoughts wandered home to our dear ones. We wondered whether we should be re-united again next year. For 4 months I continued to do this work, during the severest winter we had, then I got pleurisy, and was allowed to remain in the hut.

After lying ill for 8 weeks, I volunteered for work on a collective farm. In spite of long and hard work there I recovered my strength a little. There was more food, and it tasted better, there were also pauses in the work.

The authoress now describes some peculiarities of agriculture there.

Also in this farm work we had to do a "norm", and we generally succeeded in achieving it. The great number of gnats and flies was most unpleasant The heat also reached 50° Centigrade. The nights were, on the other hand, cool, and before sunrise it was really cold, but as soon as the sun rose, it became hot. Our midday meal was cooked in the field, and our work began at 7 o'clock in the morning.

There follows a description of the beautiful landscape.

The 3 year's waiting to return home made us at last apathetic, quarrelsome and capricious; we often shouted at one another, were ill-tempered, tired, and lost all interest in things. Then there would be a rumour, which brought us hope, but only to be the more disappointed afterwards.

Our supervisors were not angels, but they treated us like human beings. After weeks of hard work, there came on the 1. May the day of rest, for which we had been longing. Our work had proved satisfactory, and we had achieved the prescribed "norm". The vegetables grew, but also the weeds. When we had finished with the hoe at one end, where we had begun was already again covered with weeds. Our time was passed in hoeing, weeding, eating and sleeping, and during all this, we kept hoping for good news. Good news came, but unfortunately not for us Germans from the *Reich*. One day the Hungarians and Romanians were called up, brought to the camp, and sent home.

Now the rumour was, that the next transport would be going to Germany. After 6 weeks, this proved to be so for some of us. We were called up, and brought in trucks to the camp. All women over 30 years of age, sick, weak and partly disabled persons were to go home. Another medical commission came, thank God the last one, and we were happy to know, that we were going to return back home. We faithfully promised those remaining behind, not to forget them, and to help them to soon return home.

My return was quite different from my deportation. We travelled indeed in cattle trucks, but the doors remained open. We had water to wash, and room enough to keep ourselves clean. At the stopping places, we could buy fruit, milk, bread, meat and other things. Our train was decorated with branches, pictures of Stalin and banners. On these were the words: "Great Stalin, we thank you for our return." We travelled by way of Kuibysheff, Sysran, Pensa, Tula, Smolensk, Minsk and Brest-Litowsk, over the Dnieper, the Volga, the Beresina and through the Rokitno swamps. Everywhere we could see the traces of the war. Burnt villages and forests, German aeroplanes, which had been shot down, and guns and tanks, which were sticking in the Rokitno swamps.

We also saw graves of German soldiers. The towns, through which we passed, made a dirty and neglected impression, next to buildings of masonry there were houses of clay. We also saw churches with their onion-shaped domes on our way. It was apparently rare, that any of them served as places of worship. Most of them were in ruins, and trees were growing through the roof and windows. In others corn was stored, or they served as cattle-sheds and horse stables.

The prisoners of war, whom we met and spoke to on the way, were astounded to meet German women in Russia. They asked us to greet our home, and followed us sadly with their eyes. In Minsk and Brest-Litowsk transports with internees and prisoners joined us. Minsk and Smolensk had been very much damaged by the war, but had been mostly built up again by German prisoners of war, and according to the German style. In Brest German wagons with German personnel were waiting for us, and thus we had our first contact with home.

The journey through Poland did not last long. By order of the leader of the transport, the doors were shut. We were, however, not molested, and on the 25. July reached Frankfurt-on-Oder, after a journey of 17 days. Although we were received with music, addresses and good food, we were happy, when we were allowed to get in the train for the west zone, after having been checked at Gronenfeld. We did not feel free, until we were in the west zone. We did not come to our home, but to our mother country. My sister, who was the only survivor of our family, was waiting for me, and we began a new life together. I close my report with the wish and hope, that my fate will be spared you and all German women.

No. 171

Eyewitness report of Hermann Balzer of Königsberg in East Prussia.
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Experiences and general conditions in Königsberg, from the date on which it was captured by the Russians until June 1947

The number of the civilian population, who had remained in Königsberg for the most various reasons, such as compulsion, occupation, age, ill-health etc., amounted to at least 100 000, when the Russians captured the city on 8./9. April 1945[437]). This number included the refugees from East Prussian towns and villages, who had come into the city since January 1945. Mean=while the centre of the city had been destroyed, and the outskirts and suburbs very seriously damaged, by two very violent air-raids at the end of August 1944. Among the parts of the city, which were comparatively little damaged, was the block of dwellings in Maraunenhof. This included the streets between Oberteich and Schindelkopbrücke (Cäcilien-Allee, Wartenburg, Caub, Nollendorf, and Tauroggen Streets, Augusta Victoria Allee, Samitter Allee, Reicke Street, and Böttcherhofchen). I lived at 10 Caub Street, which was undamaged, with the exception of a few window panes and the chimney. I had a three and a half room flat, which was well furnished, and in which I had good clothing.

At 7 and 8 o'clock in the moring on the 9. April 1945 Russian soldiers forced their way into the air raid shelter, in which the occupants of the house had spent the night, and stole our watches. This was after they had made sure, that no German soldiers were hiding in the building, and that we were not armed I succeeded in hiding my gold watch. These soldiers laid no value upon rings.

Under the pretence, that we were to be registered, we were taken to the Augusta Victoria Allee, and here occupants of other houses were already waiting. I had nothing with me but a leather bag, containing a few victuals, a towel, shaving kit etc. Others had brought rucksacks and trunks with them as a precaution.

While we were waiting, we could see, how Russian soldiers were bringing trunks and cases out of the apartments we had left. Some of these they put in the panzer, which were waiting. Without being allowed to visit our apartments again, we were taken under guard past the Commercial High School to the Samitter Allee. For a short distance we got under gunfire, and had some wounded It was very difficult, for those who were old or lame, and particularly so for those carrying baggage, to climb up and down the steep embankment of the destroyed Hochbrücke (High bridge) in the Samitter Allee. Most of those having baggage soon did not have to trouble about it any more, as they were robbed of it during the march or when resting. I was relieved of my wedding ring.

During the first rest pause in the neighbourhood of Ballieth a young girl was dragged into a ruin, and raped by the leader of the transport. During the next rest pause this happened again. This girl died later, like many others, of hunger.

Thus we wandered aimlessly for 3 to 4 days backwards and forwards between Maraunenhof, Rothenstein, Ballieth and Quednau. Other columns had to go far into Samland. At night we stayed in the cellars of ruins or in deserted houses on the floor without being able to cover ourselves up. Our night rest was more or less interrupted by roaming soldiers, who flashed lights into our faces, in order to find women for themselves. The call: "Woman come", terrified the women and the girls. Resistance was broken by brutal force

The robberies never ended, and were officially recognized. In a house in Johanniter Street we had one after the other to march up before an officer, and put our things onto the table in front of him. What appeared valuable to him, we had to leave there, the rest he threw with a contemptuous wave of the hand onto the floor, from there we were allowed to pick them up again. Of the few things I had, he took a fancy to my fountain pen and kept it.

On the 12. and 13. April 1945 I was allowed by the Russian guards to go away, and return home with my wife and other people, who lived in Caub Street. Up to then we had received no food. One was lucky, if one then just once received bread or soup from the Russian cook. On the way back home, we were stopped by Russian soldiers in front of the Ottokar Church in Maraunenhof. These soldiers tried to drive us into the ruins of the church. A general happened to go past, and I tried to make clear to him, that we had been discharged, and received permission to go home. The general ordered us to be again arrested.

The men and women were separated, and we were brought to the large automobile halls in the Cranzer Allee, which was near to Rothenstein; these halls were already overcrowded with interned Germans There we passed the night packed together. Anyone, who wanted to relieve himself, generally was given a blow with a rifle barrel by the Mongol guards. Those, who were over 50 years of age, were allowed to leave the hall the next morning, in order to move into certain houses in the Cranzer Allee.

One of the women ready for the transfer requested an officer to be allowed to remain with her daughter in the automobile hall. This was refused, and when she approached him begging, the officer dealt her a violent blow, so that she was thrown several steps forward, and lay with blood streaming from her head. We had scarcely tried to take up our quarters in a house at 7 Cranzer Allee, in which 6 to 8 of us had gone into each room, when we were continually molested by Russian soldiers, who plundered all they found. One of those in our room had his overcoat torn from him, in spite of his resistance, another one, the lawyer Nueske, had to give up his jacket. Preserved cucumbers, which we had stored up to eat, were taken away from us. Soon after this we were terrorized and threatened by the unfounded rage of a young secret police officer, who continually stuck his dagger in the table, and while threatening us with death, demanded all the gold things we had. On this occasion I was relieved of my watch, which I had up to then saved.

Such experiences soon robbed us of our happiness over having been discharged in the morning; for some of us things were soon to get much worse.

In the evening, when I was at last about to shave myself, suddenly 3—4 armed soldiers burst into our room, and pushed me into the street and into a truck, which had driven up, without giving me any chance of washing myself, or taking anything with me. There soon followed from my room, amongst others, the lawyer Nueske, the court inspector Krüger and out of other rooms, the Grammar School master Krause, the district court judge Brezezinski, the shoemaker Kankreit and a master plumber from Kalkhöfchen Street, altogether 14 persons.

The author then gives a full report, of how he was taken to Labiau, of how he was subjected to many cross-examinations and beaten, and then finally discharged to Königsberg.

When I finally got back to Königsberg, I unfortunately found out that whole streets, especially of the suburb Maraunenhof, which I mentioned at the beginning, and which had been intact, when we were driven out on the 9. April, were now completely destroyed or burnt down. There was scarcely a house still inhabitable, out of which the Germans had already been driven, or were to be driven out. The population had been temporarily driven away, in order that the Russians could carry out the work of destruction and robbery undisturbed and unobserved, and this was all the more stupid in consideration of the fact, that they were planning to incorporate Königsberg. I was able to stay the night, and at last to clean myself up, to some extent in the intact air-raid shelter in the ruins of the house at 10 Caub Street, which had been burnt down. I also found my wife and my sister. My sister died later on in Königsberg.

The women interned in the garage at Rothenstein had been spared serious excesses, but had nothing to eat. It was not until the second week, that there was some dried bread, and soon afterwards a little thin soup every day. After two weeks the women over 50 years of age were discharged, but the younger ones had to remain some time in the camp. When these women found, that their homes had been destroyed, there was no alternative for them, but to seek common quarters in ruins and cellars.

There immediately began again cases of rape, so that the women were forced to again leave their quarters in the cellars, as the festival of the 1. Mai was approaching, and special excesses must be expected on this occasion. In Am Stadtgarten Street many men, women and children found quarters, where they were closely packed together in more or less damaged houses. I also came there through my wife, who had to share a room with 10 persons. This address was in the immediate neighbourhood of the Command Headquarters No. 2, and the women, if they observed some degree of caution, were at last safe from being raped, as this was no longer officially allowed. It is true, that soldiers often tried to get into the rooms, but it was possible to protect one's self by crying out to patrols, who were on duty.

The author again describes the time of the very worst persecutions, and reports on acts of violence against persons, known to him by name.

On the other hand the trouble and anxiety, in connection with supporting one's self from day to day, became greater. Work was compulsory, and in addition to 500 grammes of bread, there were sometimes a little sausage and rind of ham distributed as wages. Anyone, who was unable to work, received nothing, and here it should be mentioned that the work, which had to be done, was in general very hard work, such as digging, shovelling and carrying heavy burdens. Soon there was no longer any supplementary ration of bread for the day, and one often had to wait very long, in order to receive one's ration, after one had been working 10—12 hours. Later those, who could prove that they were unable to work, received 200 grammes of bread a day, until June 1946, when every further distribution ceased and the people had to be once and for all satisfied with the distribution of a few pounds of flour.

The quarters in the Am Stadtgarten had to be evacuated by Germans. I had comparatively good quarters with my wife there, as I was porter, and had to keep the lists for the workshops in the Arno-Holz Street, where German craftsmen, such as fitters, smiths, carpenters, glaziers, shoemakers and tailors had to work for the Russians. As we, however, still only received wages in the form of 500 grammes of bread a day for 10½—12 hours work, there being no holidays or free Sundays, I became unfit for work at the end of October 1945, and likewise my wife, who was certified to be unfit for work by Goldmacher, the chief doctor of the command headquarters. We, therefore, were reduced to a diet of 200 grammes of bread a day, which ceased after June 1946; and this ration had to be fetched, after the command headquarters were transferred to the Hans-Sagan Street, from the distribution centre in Kohlhof, which meant a daily walk of 8—10 kilometres along a road which was hardly passable. We tried to satisfy our hunger in vain with boiled nettles, wild spinach, dandelions and leaves from lime trees. Potato peels and stewed soup bones, which had been collected from the offal of Russian households, were particularly popular, also mussels from the pond, which was continually getting more overgrown with weeds. Dogs and cats were also popular and had disappeared. Also the food of the so-called "specialists" as all craftsmen were called (those belonging to less useful trades were called "parasites") was utterly inadequate. And this was in spite of the fact, that since about September 1945 they received, according to their food coupons, certain rations of fat, meat, sugar, etc., at cheaper prices. The cash paid in wages, since the rouble had been substitued as currency for the mark of the Allies in the fall of 1945 was not sufficient to meet the prices on the black market, which was officially tolerated and on which bread, meat, butter, eggs, fish, grain, flour, etc., were to be had in abundance. The average wages were 200—400 roubles a month, and the blackmarket prices as follows: one loaf 40—80 roubles, half a kilogramme of butter 80 roubles, a kilogramme of rye or wheat 20—40 roubles, bacon 240 roubles a kilogramme, potatoes 13—18 roubles a kilo, sugar beets 5—8 roubles, an egg 5—10 roubles, grain and flour were often sold at the price of 5—10 roubles for a water-glass full[438]).

And yet we had to thank the black market for the fact, that a certain number of the German population did not die of hunger. This black market was first of all on the Luisenmarkt (near to Hagen Street) and later on, on the square between Schrötter Street and Schleiermacher Street, near to Kohlhof. The absolutely pauperized population had always the opportunity of selling things they had saved or hoarded up, or which had come to them as a result of the many deaths, and also new things such as stockings and gloves, etc., and getting victuals for them, and so holding out a few days. German housewives made loaves or rolls from the meal or grain from the black market; it was often necessary for them to grind this stuff at great pains in the coffee grinder, but they were in this way at least able to save their relatives from hungering. For the work they did in Russian families, they hardly earned their food.

It often happened, that Germans acted as sellers for Russians, who did not want or were not allowed to appear as such themselves. There was always the danger, that, if the goods had not been honourably obtained, the German dealer would be sentenced to a very severe punishment. There was the case of Mrs. Pflaumbaum, who was sentenced to seven years penal servitude, for dealing in stockings. The market was characterized by individual arrests, police raids, pocket-picking and robbery, and children crying for hunger, who stormed the offal like dogs. On Sundays there came numbers of Poles and Lithuanians, with their wares, and it was like a migration of peoples.

There was also a special market for second-hand articles, where furniture, tools, clothes, beds and linen were traded in. As far as concerned physical labour and the paltry trading which was done, the earnings were not sufficient to purchase the most necessary food at the high prices. In addition to this, rent had to be paid for quarters, which were not fit for human beings to live in.

Those craftsmen could escape from dying of hunger, who, in addition to their work, made or repaired things for Russians in return for victuals.

As a result of malnutrition the population was particularly subject to diseases, such as typhoid, malaria and scabies. There was a very high mortality. Of the Germans living in the house at 4–8 Arno-Holz Street and who were occupied in the workshops, at least 13 died between July 1945 and May 1946. And there were only 30–40 there. Most of them were immediately buried in the garden. The wife of a shoemaker hanged herself between Christmas and New Year, before the very eyes of her husband, who was too weak from hunger to do anything, and died a week later of malnutrition.

The Germans, who had succeeded in finding adequate quarters, and in putting furniture into them out of apartments which had been left, had repeatedly to quit their quarters, mostly at very short notice, in order to accommodate Russian civilians, who were moving in; the Russians determined, whether and what things were to be left in the quarters, which had to be evacuated. Thus I had to evacuate my apartment at 4–8 Arno-Holz Street in May 1946 within 2 hours, after the workshops had been transferred to another address. The cupboard and table had to remain there. My wife was at the time sick with malaria in the fever hospital in Yorck Street. Two old women put me up, and also an old homeless woman in their quarters, which had been a mews on the Palve. These were the quarters of a certain Mr. Goyke, who had been watchman in the workshops, and had meanwhile died. His widow, his sister-in-law, and also the old woman, who moved in with me, all perished in Königsberg.

There was a terrible plague of rats in these quarters, which made it almost impossible to sleep at nights, owing to their scampering about and whistling. These rats were so bold, that they tried to tear away from us a last piece of bread, which was under the bolster, and was being kept as a precious piece of food for the next day. It was impossible to lie down to sleep, without having a stick in one's hand.

Our next billet was on the Palve, and was a small attic with a sloping roof, which was called an "off-side-room". Here we were plagued by numbers of bugs from the next room, and in addition to this the rain came in. Here I also got malaria, and was soon afterwards put into the hospital in Yorck Street. I was only treated with quinine pills, and had a relapse 8 days after I had been discharged, so that I had to go into the hospital again. This time I was given plasmochin. The doctor in charge, Professor Starlinger, was later on arrested by the Russians, and deported.

As there was not sufficient bed linen, the patients, amongst them people suffering from scabies and eczema, had in some cases to lie in beds without linen. When new patients came, if the beds had linen, the linen which had been long used by such patients as had these infectious diesases, was not-always changed, although this was most unhygienic. The result was, that one might be cured of malaria but infected with scabies, when one was discharged, and this actually happened to me. I had the impression, that this was not only due to the undoubted lack of bed linen, but also to the carelessness of unsuitable nursing and administrative personnel.

I can, however, only remember the German doctors with a feeling of gratitude and thanks. They allowed many a patient, who did not know where he could live, and how he could get food, to remain longer in the hospital, in order to receive the daily food there which, although it was insufficient, was at least regularly served out. They thus alleviated the desperation and distress of many, if only for a short time. It is remarkable, that there was a leper in a small building of the military hospital in Yorck Street, and into which building no one must go without permission. What happened to this leper, I do not know.

The big garden of the military hospital had become a cemetery, owing to the number of graves of the patients, who were buried there soon after the capture of the city; in fact, gardens served first of all very often as burial grounds, without the dead being registered. It was impossible to prevent the sewer in the yard from stinking by putting chlorine into it, after the pails from the wards had been emptied there.

In the meantime the name of Königsberg had been officially changed to that of Kaliningrad, so that we now finally lost all hope of a German administration ever again taking over the town.

In September 1946 we had to move to Kohlhof, and received quarters in a building, the roof and walls of which had holes, which were metres long and broad, and were otherwise damaged. Even by putting buckets to catch the rain, it was scarcely possible to prevent the room being flooded, and a room in the cellar, occupied by another family, was generally under water. About

40 people lived, packed together like sardines, in this house, the roof of which threatened to collapse; 11 of these people died of hunger between September 1946 and June 1947. The conditions were about the same in the neighbouring houses, and also in Charlottenburg, Ballieth, etc. The ruins which served as closets, the fact that there was no removal of offal and the difficulty in obtaining water, were characteristic of the general state of affairs, which made it easier for rats, mice and vermin in general to multiply.

The German population tormented by hunger and illnesses, kept asking in vain for permission to leave the town. When one asked another: "When shall we get out?", mostly one received the answer in resignation: "We shall all rot here." All the same, many tried to get out without the official permission, but they were always stopped, and sent back. However, people generally succeeded, in getting into Lithuania, this particularly applied to women, who hoped to get better food there for themselves and their children. Those, who came back brought with them bacon, bread, etc.[439]).

The care taken by the Russian administration of a number of German orphan children, was a striking exception in the midst of this great distress. These orphans were boys, who were of the age to go to school, and were uniformly dressed in grey and kept clean. They were regularly brought to the baths, which had been fitted up for the Russians in Kohlhof. These boys made the impression of being well fed. I hope, that they have meanswhile found homes in West or East Germany.

These arbitrary acts of brutal violence (malicious destruction of houses, chasing the people about and plundering them, raping of women and children, robbing us of our liberty and illtreating us, and compelling us to work on starvation rations) characterize the state of absolute outlawry, in which the German population was compelled to vegetate. And this the Russians did, although the Germans had not quitted their homes, trusting that they would be treated at least in accordance with the most elementary fundamentals of humanity.

Although the worst and most brutal excesses were discontinued, after the first intoxication of victory had died down, nevertheless, the insecurity in billets and public places continued, and this was in addition to the fact, that no one had legal means of protecting himself. Thus it was in the course of time dangerous for German women to go out, in order to collect leaves, berries, mushrooms and fire wood, which were so very necessary. For Russian school children often amused themselves, by throwing bottles and spitting at them, and even went so far as to tear their bags away from them. We must, however, here mention that Russian passers-by sometimes intervened to prevent this.

I remember the conduct of a certain Russian soldier during the first days of the occupation. He was leading a wounded German prisoner of war, when another Russian soldier passing by suddenly hit at the German, but the first Russian protected him by threatening the other with his gun.

A pretended Russian official used to appear amongst Germans, with a piece of paper with Russian writing on it as his identity card. He drew attention to the fact, that they had not the special permission to trade, as he pretended they ought to have, and threatened to arrest them, but declared himself satisfied with the payment in roubles of a "fine", which was a high sum for Germans to have to pay· In order to avoid going to the Commanders office and the concomitant chicanery, such as is inconceivable under German conditions, the people generally paid after long haggling.

It was no seldom occurrence for Russian bandits to break into German billets, in Kohlhof and the neighbourhood. There were also burglaries on the ruined premises where I lived, and these attempts to rob were more or less successful. In two cases, where those concerned resisted, they were murdered. Another person, who was robbed and murdered, was a German tailor, and this happened to him, while he was doing business with Russian civilians. In such cases the Russian police tried to find the criminals, this I know from the investigations they made.

The extraordinary strain resulting from physical work with too little to eat, lack of clothes, and worn-out shoes, for which one was not in a position to buy others, the bad quarters and the unhygienic conditions led necessarily to a rise in inability to work, and mortality both among men, women and children; women were compelled without any consideration for their state of health to do heavy clearing-up work, and to remove corpses, etc.

When the Russian doctors decided, that a person was not able to work, this was only important for him, in as far as he was not longer forced to do so; such a person had, however, then no further right to rations at cheaper prices. At first it had been hoped, that the Germans incapable of working would be preferentially granted permission to depart from Königsberg; this, however, did not happen. As Russian civilians poured into the city, compulsion to work ceased, and only "specialists" were excluded.

From autumn 1946 the influence of the Russians in hospitals became more evident. I was sent by a German lady doctor, who treated me, as an outside patient, to the Katharine Hospital, and was taken in by a Russian lady doctor, but on the instructions of the Russian chief doctor I was, in common with other patients, not treated and discharged without being cured. The majority of the patients were mostly Russians, who were looked after by Russian nurses. The linen was clean, and the German patients were well looked after by German Catholic sisters. It need not, however, be mentioned, that the Germans received an inadequate diet.

There follow very detailed remarks of the author concerning the obtuseness and lack of order among the Russian authorities. Also about the way, in which Germans waited in vain for the possibility of departing[440]).

When I was at the point of dying from malnutrition and illness, I at last received my permission, in the middle of June 1947, to leave the city, however, only for myself. My wife did not receive it until November 1947, as all permissions had been in the meanwhile blocked.

The author concludes his report with the description of his expulsion, and with general remarks on the fate of the territories east of the Oder and Neisse.

No. 176

Eyewitness report of the gardener A. Riemann of Ludwigsort,
district of Heiligenbeil in East Prussia
Original. January 1953. 8 pages.
Printed in part.

Conditions of life and work of the German inhabitants of the district of Heiligenbeil, under Russian methods of administration, and the principles of Russian economy from 1945—1948

The author reports first of all on his experiences during the flight, and when he met the Russians in Samland, up to his return to Ludwigsort in May 1945.

In the course of the summer of 1945 German families kept returning to Ludwigsort. Many had already been in Pomerania or even further to the west. They returned to East Prussia, in order to die there. In autumn there were about 400 inhabitants there[441]). I was temporarily nominated mayor, and had to draw up lists of the inhabitants and register the deaths. The chief thing was to supply workers for all possible and impossible purposes. There were, of course, no wages paid, and the food was moreover inadequate. No one liked going to this work. In the spring of 1946 the Russian Secret Service took over the whole administration.

In the autumn of 1945 our winter seed was ripe for harvesting. Although most of the grain remained in the fields, it saved many thousands of people their lives during the winter months. The great mortality began the next year, for there were neither bread nor potatoes, as nothing had been planted in the province. For miles the fields were covered with thorns and thistles. In our district about 20 000 morgen were scantily tilled. All the rest lay fallow, and became in the course of time wooded[442]).

This was chiefly due to the system of "norms", which was also introduced into agriculture. All work was reckoned, and paid according to "norms". It was generally impossible to achieve these "norms", especially considering how physically exhausted the people were. In order to earn the merest necessities of life the work was, therefore, done badly and superficially. For every 30 workers there was a supervisor, who received wages, and had to reckon the work done in square metres with a measuring instrument.

For every kind of work there was a special "norm", for instance, for hoeing onions three different grades, first, second and third hoeing. The whole method of working is so complicated, that an army of officials is necessary for running a farm of 2000 morgen. The system of piece-work so jeered at by Communists has been substituted by a cunning form of exploitation.

Until the end of June we were allowed to do the farm work in our own way. Then everything was changed. Administrative officers were attached to the different command officers, and decided what was to be done. Every locality, where Germans lived, was allotted an area, which had to be harvested. The crop was to serve exclusively to feed the Germans. Machines were brought, chiefly bundling machines. The army supplied the horses. In the course of the summer the population of Ludwigsort harvested about 300 cartloads of rye and wheat. They were put dry in stacks and in barns. Nevertheless, a great amount remained in the fields, because there were not enough workers and machines.

The summer grain, as far as the Russians had sown any at all, all remained standing. As soon as the crop was brought in, the threshing began. However, not for the Germans, but every military authority and all troops passing through, etc., who cared to do so, procured threshing machines, set the Germans to do the work, and, of course, took the threshed grain away with them. What was not threshed lay where it was, and got drenched with the rain. Civilians came even from as far as White Russia, and threshed the corn with sticks, in order to get alcohol from it. They earned their living by selling this to the soldiers. There remained for the Germans, what they were able to take for themselves. Although I requested the commandant to forbid this piracy in threshing by outside units, nothing was done. What the command office of Ludwigsort had itself had threshed, was locked up in the school. It was to be used later as seed.

After the harvest there were new orders issued. The fields had to be prepared for the winter sowing. Men and women had to dig the fields, 200 square metres being the "norm" per day. Owing to their physical weakness the majority scarcely achieved the half. A plough with two emaciated horses had to do a hectare every day. It is no wonder that instead of ploughing, the ground was only scraped, and that, instead of being dug, it was only a little rummaged. Further, the seed was put much too late into the soil. It was a pity, that the grain was so senselessly wasted. But the command was, "norm" according to plan! No one could do anything against this.

Conditions continued to get worse. First of all the Russians dissolved their local command office in October 1945. An administrative officer came from Heiligenbeil occasionally to Ludwigsort. Apart from this, the colonel of an infantry regiment had to decide everything, that was to be done in Ludwigsort; it had become a garrison. Young Lithuanians were called up for service and trained there. Shooting ranges were laid out, and also places for bomb dropping. The rattling of machine-guns scarcely stopped during the day. As soon as 1945 the Russians were arming at high pressure. We were out of contact with the rest of the world, and we lost all hope of there coming an early change in our desperate situation.

The wildest rumours were circulated, for instance, that American ships had arrived at Pillau to fetch us away. It was always the same, the wish was father of the thought.

Meanwhile the frontiers were severely guarded, and closed by high barbed wire. No one was allowed to go to Poland or Lithuania, and we were veritable prisoners in our own country. It was solely the hope, that our lot would sometime change, which kept us going. Excesses and violence increased. Shooting on our farm was not rare. If in the evening the doors were bolted, and could not be at once opened, when Russians were outside and knocking, then they immediately shot through the windows or doors. These evening visits were mostly directed at the women. Anyone, who wanted to save himself, had to spring through the window on the other side of the house, whether he was clothed or unclothed, and whether it was raining or ice-cold. The only way of saving one's self was by running away in the darkness into the wood. The women did not dare to return, until everything seemed to have quieted down again.

One evening we heard excited voices before the door of our house, which were quickly followed by a shot. We rushed out in all directions, and found a Russian soldier writhing on the ground. The police were called, and appeared at once, and took the wounded man to a doctor. Fortunately he survived, and was able to state, that he had been shot by a Russian captain who, of course, had run away. The shot had not been meant for him, but for a German nightwatchman, who wanted to prevent the two Russians from breaking into the house to look for women. If the Russian had not been able to give evidence, the blame would, of course, have been put on to the Germans, and we might be no longer alive.

In this way the autumn passed, and Christmas was almost there. Then the order was issued, that Ludwigsort must be evacuated by the Germans. This was a nice Christmas present. On Christmas Eve itself the dwellings, as far as there were any, had to be given up. Only a few craftsmen were allowed to remain, because they were specialists. We had to get out of our house, but were allowed to more to my brother Franz, because he was working as a tailor for the Russians, and was allowed to continue living in his own house. All the others had to move to places in the neighbourhood, such as Schwanis, Rippen, Wendelau, Laukitten, Groß Klingbeck, etc. Of course, no provision had been made for quarters. Everyone had to look out for himself, and see where he could stay. In special cases pieces of furniture were allowed to be brought into these other villages, but this was a piece of obligingness on the part of the military authorities.

The spirits of the people naturally sank, particularly so, as there were no news from the rest of Germany. In the course of the winter a state farm was established in Rippen, and had to deliver all its products to the military authorities. The director lived with his staff in Rippen, and all the officers were there. The three sections of Lank, Laukitten and Pohren belonged to this administrative district. In each section there were about 80 cows, 150—200 horses and some pigs. The dairy and the nursery garden were established in Schwanis. My brother Paul, who was also a gardener, went in the winter of 1945—1946 to Rippen, and lived there with the Russian administrative captain

As the conditions got continually worse in Ludwigsort, and meanwhile the military had been relieved by civilians, I moved in the summer of 1946 with my wife to Schwanis, in order to manage a nursery garden there for the state farm on the land of Diester. My own hot-house in Ludwigsort had been already dismaritled in September 1945 and sent to Russia.

Almost all Germans got work on the state farm, or with other administrative authorities, such as the post, the municipality, the school, etc. The workers also received food coupons. Those, who could not work, such as old people, sick people, etc., received no food coupons. If these unhappy people had no relatives, who could perhaps help them with food, then they were doomed to die of hunger. This is inconceivable considering this form of government, which pretends to be the most progressive and most social that exists. The wages, as far as any were paid at all, were very bad, as a result of the "norm" system; all the same one managed somehow or other to live.

There were on an average 40—50 women occupied in the nursery garden in Schwanis. I remained there, until I came with a transport to Germany in 1948.

As already mentioned, the military personnel was transferred in June 1946 to Lithuania, and was replaced by a civilian one. We heard from the soldiers, that we need expect nothing good of this, and this proved to be right. It was not until the managers of the administration had been several times changed, that things got a little better in 1947. This administration first of all had its seat in the district court in Heiligenbeil. Two months later it moved to Ludwigsort, and took up its quarters in the house of the master sweep Steinau. Ludwigsort thus became in a certain sense the district town, and was in the future called Ladushkin.

During the first days after the civilian administration had been established, all the mayors were summoned to Heiligenbeil. There was first of all a cross-examination, according to municipalities. We had to pass through several reception and waiting rooms, until we finally came to the chief of the administration. We were often received with the word: "Fascist". In one large room, in which the tables and chairs were arranged in the form of a half moon, there sat the highest officials. It was a strange sight, and one did not know, whether to cry or laugh. After a short interrogation, work was at once assigned to us. In Ludwigsort 750 tons of hay were to be harvested, by the end of July 1946. I mentioned the difficulties, because it would be impossible in the circumstances. "Siberia" was the only answer. If we had no horses, then we must collect the hay by carrying it ourselves.

The next day a representative of the *Landrat* came to Ludwigsort, but only to order the evacuation and cleaning up of the houses allotted for accomodating the administration. We also had to work on Sundays, but the work was generally quite senseless, and consisted for instance in plucking moss in the woods, and collecting fir-tree needles.

The Russian civilians came with the administration to Ludwigsort, so that there were generally only barns and stables left, as quarters for the Germans. It was a striking fact, that buildings, which had not ben destroyed by the war, found their way into the stoves of the Russians, and gradually disappeared. Even the administrative buildings of Schmidt's farm, which had been repaired by the military administration, were for the most part dismantled, and used as fuel. When there was nothing more available in Ludwigsort, it was the turn of the other localities to pass through this process of destruction. If a dwelling house anywhere was repaired, two new ones had to be dismantled elsewhere, in order to provide the material.

It was the same thing, in regard to the fields. Meadows became swamps, fields became wooded land. In some places the young plants reached a height of 3 metres. Malaria raged among the German population.

In 1947 and 1948 the first transports of Russians arrived. They came from the remotest parts of Asia. They had been sent on their way, with magnificent promises; they were to receive 2000 roubles, a cow, a sheep and a few fouls. They were also promised a nice house. Their disappointment, however, was great, when they found out, that they had got to work on collective farms. Many of them secretly sold their cattle, and went back to Russia.

At the end of 1947 the conditions of life became slowly more bearable for those of the German population, who had survived the worst time; and this was in spite of the fact, that the Russian economic and administrative methods had not changed in principle. Gradually wages began to be paid for work done, and it was possible to obtain victuals for roubles on the free market and in stores. It is true, that the supply was very irregular, as there were often embezzlements on the part of the Russians, but the famishing period seemed to be at an end. Furthermore, a reform of the currency increased the purchasing power of the rouble. Of course, the Russians first of all received supplies, and it often happened, that the Germans, after having queued up for hours, had to go away again with empty stomachs.

It should also be mentioned, that during the winter months of 1946 to 1947 an orphanage was foundet for children without parents; German women worked there under the supervision of Russians. At the end of 1947 these children came with a transport to Germany.

It would make this report too long, if we were to give details about individuals. All these things belong to the category of arbitrary acts and outlawry, of which the Germans were victims in their own home.

I am attaching a list of those, who died between 1945 and 1948 in the district of Ludwigsort; in this list I can only give, what I am still able to remember[443]).

The cemeteries, frequently a measure for judging the standard of civilisation in a country, were completely neglected during the occupation time. Grave stones in particular were used for erecting Russian monuments, and for repairing the roads. There were cinemas and stores in the churches, which were not dismantled.

Not all Russians are convinced of the infallibility of the Communist doctrine and principles. On the contrary the elder generation is mostly opposed to the system of terror. Such persons helped the Germans as far as they could, and often secretly made them presents. It is, however, the character of the Russian to share his last piece of bread with someone today, and tomorrow to treat him cruelly. This is for us Germans inconceivable.

Our one object, therefore, was to be free again, and live among Germans. Considering the speed of sovietization in East Prussia, our notion, that the Germans had become slowly a nuisance to the Russians, was confirmed, particularly with regard to the military fortifying of the district of Kaliningrad (Königsberg). The first reports, that people would be sent to Germany, were spreading. Finally things got so far, and on the 27. November 1947 the first 1100 Germans left East Prussia by way of Allenstein for Erfurt. We were with the second transport on the 7. April 1948. The rest of our relatives, who had remained behind, followed with the third transport in October 1948.

No. 179

Eyewitness report of B. L. of Gumbinnen in East Prussia
Attested copy. 1. December 1952.

Events and general conditions under Russian domination in Gumbinnen and the neighbourhood from 1945—1948

Born in 1893 I was in October 1944 called up from Gumbinnen to serve as a soldier, and was taken prisoner by the Russians near Berlin-Pankow on the 8. May 1945.

After having passed through many prisoners of war camps in Brandenburg I succeeded, after having been a prisoner of war for six weeks, in getting discharged because of acute conjunctivitis in June 1945. The question was, where was I now to go to. I had given Gumbinnen as my home, and promptly received a discharge certificate and a railway ticket to Gumbinnen. After a railway journey involving many great difficulties, I arrived on the 1. July 1945 at the destroyed railway station in Gumbinnen.

This was early in the morning between 3 and 4 o'clock. No one was to be seen. The place was desolate, empty and abandoned, and the streets were covered with ruins and filth. I passed through König Street, over the wooden bridge, which the Russians had erected in the continuation of Post Street over the River Pissa, and reached König's Square. Two Russian sentries with rifles were standing in front of the memorial to Friedrich Wilhelm I, for the purpose of protecting König's Square. I withdrew, without the Russians seeing me.

I walked quickly through Post Street, and Damm Street to Wilhelm Street, in order to get to my home, which was in Park Street. Here also I found nothing but empty rooms, and it was uncanny. With the exception of the two sentries, I had still not seen a living creature. I was looking for fellow countrymen, and walked further to Preussendorf. I had to walk a long distance through Preussendorf, which had not been damaged much, before I reached the nursery garden of Wengrofski, and here were the first German fellow countrymen, whom I was able to see and speak to. These were the old butcher Schönke with his daughter-in-law and grandchildren, Mrs. Hinz, Franz Schätzki, Rudolf Fischer, Mrs. Schneider of Thuren, Mrs. Hundsdörfer with her children and Fritz Gruber of Preußendorf. About 18—20 fellow countrymen of mine had found refuge on these premises. I was welcomed here in a friendly manner, and for the first time for weeks received hot food. Here I remained.

Preussendorf was occupied by Russian troops, who had taken for themselves all the houses, which were inhabitable. On one premises a butcher's had been established, and 10 to 15 oxen were slaughtered there every day. The Russians in Preussendorf had collected a great portion of the cattle left behind by the Germans. They, therefore, slaughtered without bounds and without aim. The Russians took for themselves only the best part of the slaughtered oxen. Inferior parts, and particularly those from inside such as liver, heart, etc., they threw away. These parts were thrown into communication and firing trenches, and then covered up with earth. And here we would draw attention to the good-naturedness of many Russian soldiers. We Germans were allowed almost every day to fetch as much as we liked from these leavings of fresh meat. The Russian soldiers, also came to us, and we had to do their washing. For this and other services we received bread and victuals. We did not have to go hungry in Preussendorf.

In 1946 we had to leave Preussendorf by order of the Russian army, and to go to Gumbinnen. There was now a little more life in the town. A few hundred Russian civilians had settled there, and also more and more Germans had come back. The Russians took up their abode in the undamaged houses, and the Germans, whom one met there, had to clear out and seek an abode elsewhere. Many Germans had to continually move from one place to the other.

I lived at 12 Meelbeck Street for nearly 3 years with about 20 fellow countrymen. This was the former dwelling of the shoemaker Zielasko. The house was very badly damaged, and that is the reason the Russians did not put us out. German fellow countrymen were dwelling in all parts of the town, wherever there was a chance. They established themselves everywhere in old or damaged houses, because they thought the Russians would not put them out of these. In Post Street and the Langereihe there were 150—200 Germans. In many of the rooms 3—5 families had been forced to take up their quarters.

In the years 1947—1948 there were continually 1000 Germans in Gumbinnen, and they were not all of them former natives of the town; most of them had come here from other parts of East Prussia. In the larger towns such as Königsberg, Insterburg, etc., the life of the Germans was made very hard. Anyone, who was able to do so, moved to a smaller town near the Lithuanian frontier. Here life was pleasanter because of the immediate contact with Lithuania and Latvia. When one came away from there with hoarding rucksacks, one did not have to pass by Insterburg or Königsberg, where everyone was checked very severely by the militia.

The Russian civilians in our town came from all parts of Russia. They came in a state, which caused us to shake our heads. They were in rags, and were a great contrast to us Germans, although we no longer looked very well groomed. They took possession of the houses and dwellings, into which we were not allowed to go, and used for the whole family only one room; cattle and other things they had brought with them were accomodated in the other rooms. With the increase of the Russian civilian population, trading began again in Gumbinnen. Stores were opened for the sale of victuals and other articles of utility. In 1948 there were 10—15 stores in Gumbinnen, and in addition to that 20—30 restaurants, which were scattered over the whole town. For roubles everyone could get what he wanted.

In addition to these state places of sale there was a Black Market in Gumbinnen. From 1946—1947 it was on Turn Square in Hindenburg Street. In 1948 it was transferred to a shed in König Street, and which belonged to Birnbacher, the wood dealer. Here the Russian civilians sold their products: milk, butter, eggs, vegetables, etc., and here many a German sold his last belongings, in order to keep himself alive. A still larger place of sale of this kind was the Black Market in Wirballen.

Here Germans, Lithuanians and Russians bought and sold. People came there from all over East Prussia, in order to sell things at a better price, and to purchase victuals much more cheaply. Some of the Germans brought their own property, and some of them things they had found or dug out of the ruins of the houses and gardens. On this market everything was offered for sale. Pitchforks, spades, tools, nails, household articles, pots, pans, china, clothes, suits, women's dresses and shoes. Everything came there to be sold, and was bought by the Lithuanians. Agricultural equipment was in particular demand, such as harrows, ploughs, cart-wheels, and machines. Most of those offering such articles for sale were Germans from the collective farms, who bought working clothes for the money they received.

The Lithuanians, on the other hand, offered for sale: butter, eggs, meat, vegetables, and potatoes, everything much cheaper than in the towns of East Prussia. The market was held twice a week. There was always a crowd of 150—200 farmer's carts. The buying in Wirballen was helped by a slow train, which was called the workmen's train; it arrived in the morning from Insterburg at Wirballen, and went back again at midday. The train was overfilled on market days with Germans and Russian civilians; it had 5—6 coaches for passengers, and 2—3 for goods.

If the Russian militia or police wanted hard liquor, they robbed the Germans of their things, and drove them away from the market. Also on the market itself the Germans had to be on the lookout, for there was an enormous amount of stealing. Bags and rucksacks were often cut with razor blades, while one was actually carrying them on his back. Novices seldom escaped without paying dearly for their experience.

Generally speaking the Russian did not trouble about the Germans. Our contact with him was only unpleasant, when he wanted our dwellings, our clothes or other things. For these were then his property. It was all the same to him, whether we lived, starved, were in want, were ruined or died.

At the beginning of 1946 there was a registration of the Germans, this was, however, not a complete one. It was not until 1947, that Germans were compelled to have passes. From then onwards there were frequent and severe controls. This controlling of passes was carried out by the militia in the dwellings, often late in the evening or in the night. The Germans were in demand as workers by the Russian military and civil authorities, as long as there were not sufficient Russian civilians settled in Gumbinnen. The German men and women were occupied in washing, in charring, and in removing rubbish from the streets. Specialists were in demand, such as masons, painters, tailors, etc. At the beginning the roubles earned were scarcely enough to buy bread. Later on the payment was better. Specialists often earned very good wages. But he, who could not work, and who had no more to sell, and our old and sick people, had a very bad time. They wasted away, until they were relieved by death. Most of them died of exhaustion and typhoid caused by hunger.

We helped one another a great deal, and it was very hard for all to survive the times of famine and cold. Far too many Germans succumbed to their hardships. Among these was the merchant Birnbacher, the cattle dealer Conrad, and many other natives of Gumbinnen.

. I earned my living by procuring firewood for the stores. Every day I collected wood from the ruins, and chopped up 6—8 baskets full. As more and more Russians came at the beginning of 1948 I was no longer needed, and went off to Lithuania. And how did our life develop? In the shortest time possible we were compelled to entirely change our mode of living. We now had to do, what would previously have been impossible for us. The floor was our bed, a mantle or an old rug our counterpane. Our linen and our clothes were torn to pieces, and our shoes were breaking apart. We had no soap to wash and shave, and we cut one another's hair. We were continually infested with lice, bugs, and particularly flees. We did all we could, as far as it was possible, to keep ourselves and our quarters clean. But this instrusive vermin continually returned.

We visited one another, in order to pour out our hearts, and particularly to make plans for getting away. We did not want to finish our lives with the Russians. We took part in prayer-meetings, which were held in larger dwellings. We had to be careful in our conversations when working, as one could easily attract attention. We were not safe day or night. The Russian secret services could fetch anyone for cross-examination, with the words: "Are you a spy, or fascist?" Some never returned from such cross-examinations.

We had in 1945 no contact with the outside world or with Germany, we knew nothing and heard nothing. The first post from Germany came in 1946, and was distributed to us in the previous railway building at 5 Meiser Street, which was the place, where medical examinations were held. Miss Gross, who formerly lived in Stallupöner Street, did the distributing of the post. At the end of 1947 Miss Gross was dismissed. The post, which arrived was put on a table in the post office room, and everyone could look for his mail and that of his acquaintances, and take it away. The result was, that many letters were lost, and did not reach the right people.

The post on an average took 3 months to reach the addressees in Gumbinnen. Only some of my companions had the luck of receiving post. Most of them had got separated somewhere or other from their relatives and acquaintances, and the one did not know, where the other was.

First of all I received much post from my acquaintances, and answered many letters, which contained enquiries about relatives. Later I had to stop doing this, as I had not the paper nor the roubles to pay the postage.

There came very many peculiar enquiries to the German authorities in Gumbinnen, such as the municipality, the police and the district court, which all no longer existed. Not only private individuals but even authorities in West Germany wrote asking for documents and certificates. Enquiries were made of the police, as to whether furniture was in this and that house, and had been well looked after, the church administration was asked, whether the graves were being looked after, and the real estate recording office was expected to give information about certain premises and lands.

I was more than a hundred times in Lithuania and Latvia. These were begging journeys, which we Germans made there, and had to make, in order to manage to live. We travelled, of course, illegally in passenger and goods trains to and through Lithuania. In passenger trains we stood on the foot boards or lay flat on the roof, in goods trains we hid ourselves behind iron, coals, cases and bales of material. We travelled in summer and in winter, when the temperature was 20—25° below zero Centigrade. The water ran out of our eyes, and our hands and feet were frozen. It was not so simple to hold out hours in such cold, in order that the train personnel or the militia should not see us at the different stations. When our station came we sprang off, mostly in the darkness of the night. But we had to travel. Either one held out, or one perished, as there was nothing to eat at home, and many were waiting for something to be brought.

When we travelled, we were gambling with death. Those, whom the Russian militia caught, were often thrown ruthlessly out of the train, while it was in motion. I have to thank God, that I every time received good presents, and after eating well there, came back again satiated.

The Lithuanians and Latvians helped us as far as they possibly could. They helped us although this was prohibited, and punishments were threatened by the Russians, such as fines and the expulsion to Siberia, if Germans were given food and refuge in Latvia and Lithuania.

Ways and means were always found, when we stood before their doors begging to be helped. Many Germans also went to Lithuania for good. In summer 1948 I saw many Germans, men, women, and children, who had found refuge and work with Lithuanian farmers. Many of the German children had often forgotten their fathers' names. There were also cases, where Lithuanians adopted German children as their own. There are still many Germans living in Lithuania and Latvia, and very many Germans have been saved by Lithuanians and Latvians from starving to death.

We are deeply grateful for this help, and shall never forget it, we shall impress upon our children and childrens' children, how the Lithuanians and Latvians helped us in the time of our need[444]).

No. 187

Eyewitness report of the farm official A. B. of Eichmedien,
district of Sensburg in East Prussia
Testified copy. May 1950. 19 pages.
Printed in part.

Experiences and conditions under Russo-Polish administration in Eichmedien, until the expulsion in October 1945

After a detailed description of the futile attempts at flight and the terrible things which happened, when the Russian troops marched through Eichmedien, the author continues:

Along with the last men, left on our farm, I had to drive our last 20 cows and 300 sheep to Glubenstein farm on the 13. February 1945. One of the first Russian command offices was there. In order to have some chance of living, I brought some sheep and one cow for each family from the chief farm in Eichmedien.

In the wood, which was near, I saw a few horses galloping about, and caught them with the help of some boys. They were colts, but I thought, that we should be able to use them for light work, as we had not one single horse left.

My trouble proved in vain, for on the next day, there came a crowd of plundering Russians, and took everything from us, including horses, cows and sheep. I had distributed peas, corn and flour to the families from the granary, and they had all hidden this food in their lofts. The plundering Russians even took this corn and flour.

On the 18. February 1945 a Russian officer, who was passing through, took my carpet and my wireless set away with him, he also sought out the best articles from our linen.

Every day there were more horrors. In the evening one could everywhere see the blaze of burning houses, barns and piles of straw, which the Russians had set on fire. Russians also set on fire the eight large piles of rye, wheat and rape-seed, which belonged to our farm, and which were distributed over the fields.

On the 25. and 28. February plundering Russians fetched away my two sisters, and also the sheep, which had not yet been discovered, as they were in a stall, which was hard to find. They searched the whole house, and turned it upside down. My wife and I and our child were not allowed to leave the kitchen, while they were robbing and plundering. In the course of this, they found the hiding place in the loft, where I had nailed clothes of mine and property of the refugees in cases.

We sat in fear and terror downstairs, in case they should find arms and ammunition in the cases of the refugees, for in this case they would have treated me as a guerilla, and made me responsible. Thank God, they found nothing of this kind, but they held a telephone before my face, and cursed me as "A great capitalist". While one of them was on guard with a pistol in his hand, the others loaded everything.

Meanwhile Russian local headquarters had been established in the towns and larger villages. There was a large permanent headquarters, including secret police and many soldiers in the little town of Rhein. This town had always been famous, because of its large penitentiary.

The Russians particularly looked out for all men, who had belonged to the *Volkssturm*. They treated them as guerillas, and arrested all those, who supposedly had had anything to do with the *Volkssturm*. Although the *Volkssturm* in Eichmedien and the neighbourhood had never been in action, nevertheless, every man was on the list of the *Volkssturm*, who was only moderately healthy and not too old. The Russians, therefore, at least had a reason for their action, and accordingly arrested very many men from the youngest to the oldest. Those arrested were first of all brought to Rhein. What happened to them there, I found out a little later.

On the 1. March 1945 I was also arrested by the Russians, and brought to Rhein. One man had stated in the course of the cross-examination that I also was on the list of the *Volkssturm.* Perhaps he did this, in order to escarpe being beaten and ill-treated when cross-examined.

The room, in which I was shut up with many other prisoners, was exactly over the room, in which the cross-examinations were going on. One continually heard the blows, as those being cross-examined were thrashed, and also their cries. In addition to men of the *Volkssturm,* there were also many men and women, who had belonged to the Party. These were specially thrashed and ill-treated, during the cross-examinations.

When I was cross-examined, I observed that the Russians were not interested in finding out, whether a person was guilty or innocent, but that their chief purpose was to find, by means of compulsion and brutality, men, who were perhaps somewhere in hiding, in order to arrest them, and secondly to collect exact personal details for certain long lists. These lists served the Russians for the purpose of assembling labour columns for the Soviet Union. This cross-examination was carried out by Russian interpretesses, and personal details. such as occupation, school education, Party, *Volkssturm,* relatives, etc., were enquired into. Early in the morning the next day, which was the 2. March, all prisoners were put in trucks in order to be taken away. Old and young men, elder women and young girls, all of us were mixed up, and put in the trucks. As there were not enough trucks available, we had to press ourselves together as closely as possible. The trucks were full up of people, and as many as 40 were in each one. I counted 20 trucks in our column. In the truck, in which I was, there were many men, women and young girls from Eichmedien, who, as I knew quite well, had never belonged to the *Volkssturm* or to any other National Socialist Organization.

When the trucks started some of them tried to begin singing farewell songs. But soon every tone was stifled by tears, and the singing became an uncontrolled lamentation. We were packed like cattle, and were travelling to an unknown fate as slaves of Russia.

In the bitterest cold we went to Insterburg via Lötzen. As far as here we all had to be transported by trucks, because on all the railway routes the rails had been removed by German prisoners, even the rails of the light railway from Rhein to Rastenburg. In Insterburg a Russian officer checked the trucks again, and compared the number of the prisoners with what was on the lists, When he saw me, he hesitated a moment, and then ordered me to get out, and to go with him to the guard. Acquaintances of mine from Eichmedien shouted out to me, that I was certainly going to be sent home, and asked me to take their greetings to their wives and children. I did not believe, that the exception meant anything good for me.

When I got to the guard, there was already an older man there, from Gneist. The officer looked for the lists, which had our names on them, and looked us up and down again from head to food. Then he took a red pencil, and struck our names off the list. He wrote a few Russian sentences on an ordinary slip of paper out of his notebook, signed them with the red pencil and stamped them, and gave each of us a slip. He then explained to us, that we were too old, and could go home again. I cannot describe, how we felt at these words.

When we left the house, the trucks were still there, but were empty. A long goods train with shut doors was waiting at the station, which was not far away. The doors and windows of the wagons had barbed wire nailed over them, and the engine was just being coupled onto the train. There were footsteps leading to this train of a column, which had been standing near the trucks, and had marched through the deep snow to the railway station. God had saved me as if by a miracle from this fate. The column of empty trucks went back to Rhein, and certainly to fetch a fresh transport. We went back with one of the trucks to Rhein, cowering in fear between Russian guards. At the local headquarters we were strictly ordered to say nothing. We were not to tell anyone, what was happening here. The Bolshevists repeated this to us again and again.

I then began to walk home with my comrades, and arrived back 5 days after I had been taken prisoner in the middle of the night on the 5. March. My wife and child could not realize the fact, that I was back again, for of all those, who had been taken away, no-one had ever come back again. But it was a fact. For days I had not shaved, I was blue with cold, and my cheeks had sunken in with hunger. All this had caused the Russian officer to regard me as too old and too weak, although I was only just 59 years of age. He knew, what hardships everyone had to pass through, and was convinced, that I would not survive the transport, much less the work in the big camps in the heart of Russia. That was my piece of luck, and I only have to thank this fact for today being still alive.

I have heard from acquaintances, with whom I am still corresponding, that the transport then went from Insterburg deep into Russia and behind the Urals. A few people were discharged as being sick, and were expelled into the Russian zone of Germany. They reported, that they had had to live and work hard under inhumane conditions, in camps behind the Urals. Many died of exhaustion and contagious diseases, among them also acquaintances, with whom I had been sent in the same truck from Rhein to Insterburg.

I was now again at home, but always lived in fear, that other Russians would come and fetch me away. Every day we heard of deportations. All, who seemed to the Russians to be suitable for work, were arrested and deported, no matter whether men, women or children. I had no trust in my piece of paper with the red signature and the stamp. I had often heard from other places, how such certificates hat been simply torn up by other Russians, and the person concerned all the same deported. I, therefore, hid myself for days in the cellar. One day, however, a Russian surprised me in my home. When he had read the slip of paper, he said: "Everything alright, you will work here"; I then had fresh courage.

During the five days of my absence, when my wife was alone with the child, the Russians carried on awfully in our dwelling. During the night from the 3. to 4. March, 4 Russians brought my wife a little pig, and ordered her to cook it for a meal. They went away, and came back after a short time with 4 women. Each one had taken a woman, from where he just happened to find her. One of the women was advanced in pregnancy, and another was a child of 14 years. The women had to help to cook the meat and prepare the meal. After eating like animals, one cannot say like human beings, they dragged the women into the bedroom. They had meanwhile made a place to lie down on the two beds. My wife and our 12 year old daughter had to sleep in the next room on the sofa, and to hear the lamentations and shrieks of the poor women the whole night. The whole night they were tormented by these devilish Russians, who were no longer like human beings. It was only by changing her outside appearance, that my wife escaped being raped. This was a shocking night, which never can be forgotten by my wife and child.

On Sunday, the 11. March, in the morning some Russians brought me a deer, which they had shot somewhere. I was to skin it, and get it ready for cooking. They said they would come back to fetch it at 3 o'clock. In the meantime it was 6 o'clock, 8o'clock and 10 o'clock, without anyone coming. As it was pitchdark outside, I assumed, that they would not come, until the next morning, and as we also had no light, because there was no electric light we went to bed. I was, however, hardly in bed, when someone shook the door violently.

When I opened the door, I received a violent blow in the face, from a young Russian officer. He cursed awfully, and I noticed, that he and all those standing behind him were drunk. He wanted to know, why the door was locked and observed, that the Russians were soldiers and not dogs, and could enter any place they liked.

Among these Russians were several officers. While they were sitting in the room and warming themselves, I had to stand outside with the horses, and look after 6 sleighs, with which they had come. My wife heard, how excitedly they were talking in the room, and saying that things were going slowly an the front. The cursed *SS* was holding them up everywhere, they said. We ourselves were still hoping for a change for the better.

As we had no more cattle on our farm, no milk, almost no flour, I determined to move to the chief farm in Eichmedien. There was a Russian headquarters there, consisting of 3—4 Russians, and those who worked there received corn, potatoes and other victuals. I hoped, that I should be able to feed myself and family there. I also thought, that there we should be safer from the continual attacks of Russians roaming about. Where we were at the time was isolated, and the wild Russians could commit their violence undisturbed. Later on, however, I found out, that also in the large village of Eichmedien it was not better, in spite of the Russian headquarters. I told the other families on the farm my plan, and asked them to go with us, which they refused to do. They did not want to leave their dwellings and their homes, where they had already lived for very many years. A few months later, they had to leave the farm, within a quarter of an hour.

I, therefore, moved on the 19. March with my wife and daughter alone to Eichmedien. Some people, who were able to make a room free, gave us quarters. I got a cart and horses from the farm, and was thus able to fetch my furniture and timber. When we were actually loading, suddenly some Russians appeared. I was afraid because of the horses, and was sure, that the Russians would take them away. I had luck, however, for when I told them it was all being done for the headquarters, they allowed me to go without difficulty.

On the main farm there were still horses, cows and sheep. And I hoped, that I should be able to work here more undisturbed. On the 23. March one member of each family had to go to Rhein. We went from Eichmedien with large farm carts. We experienced a general registration, and we were given registration slips to serve as identity cards.

Also in Eichmedien roaming Russians took everything, which they could lay hands on and wanted. As it was very cold, wood which had been sawn and chopped up, was in great demand. A stock of wood, which I had brought with me from the other farm, was stolen from me on the 4. April by Russians posted in a neighbouring village. Begging and threatening, that I would go to the commanding officer, had no effect, and the wood was loaded by daylight into a truck, and taken away.

One day I went with some boys to fetch turnips from the other farm, in order to feed the cows in Eichmedien with them. While we were loading, some Russians came, and took the two best horses. When I told them the horses were the property of the command headquarters, they beat and laughed at me, and rode off on the horses. Such like things happened every day.

Gradually there came more Poles to the village. It was rumoured, that we were going to be placed under Polish administration, but no-one knew anything for certain. Then one day all the inhabitants were ordered to come to a meeting. A Pole came from Sensburg to this meeting, and stated that we now belonged to the territory administered by the Poles, and that we must obey Polish orders. He then asked the meeting, whom they wished to have as mayor, whereupon, I was proposed by the meeting.

On the 2. May I had to go to Sensburg, where a large Polish document was handed over to me, and I was now mayor of Eichmedien. My good knowledge of the Polish language helped me very much in negotiations. I had before hoped to have peace in Eichmedien, but this hope proved to be an illusion. A terrible time now dawned for me as mayor.

The farmers, who had all been deported, were missing or had been killed, and the Russians had taken everything away from their wives. There were practically no more cows and pigs. The fowls, which had not been caught alive, were shot like sparrows in the fields. The cows, which were still there, belonged to the Russian local headquarters, and people, who had succeeded in hiding a pig, slaughtered it secretly.

In such circumstances came the Russian and Polish orders about the delivering up of "products", that is to say, of victuals. The Russian headquarters had to receive a supply of victuals every week such as butter, eggs and bacon. The Poles also sent long lists from Sensburg, and on these lists the "products", which had to be delivered up, were exactly entered. These entries included great quantities of bacon, meat, eggs, butter, etc. The mayor was absolutely responsible for these deliveries being carried out. How was I to do that?

Different farms belonging to the municipality were situated in the surroundings at a distance of several kilometres from one another. I drove and ran about everywhere, begging for the things in detail, in order to deliver the amount demanded. Imprisonment was threatened in the case of non-fulfilment. The farmers, who themselves had not much, were soon unwilling to give me anymore. They said I would be helping the Russians and Poles to plunder them. No-one can imagine, what I then went through.

As nothing was safe in the houses from the plundering Russians, I hid the victuals, which I had with difficulty collected for delivery, outside in the garden or in the field. One day the Russians discovered, where I had hidden all the stuff, either by betrayal or by chance. When I came there in the morning, there was nothing left. The whole of my pains and work had been futile.

On another occasion I had already loaded all the victuals, and was on my way to the Polish headquarters at Sensburg. I was stopped by some Russians, who, when they saw that I had bacon, eggs, butter and meat in the back of my cart, took everything away from me. When I explained to them, that these things were for the Polish headquarters, they replied: "The Poles have not conquered this country, therefore, they have not the right to take anything from it. If they want anything, they must work for it themselves." When I reported such things to the Poles, they did not believe me, and maintained, that I did not want to deliver up anything. I, therefore, had to put up with their insults and threats.

The Poles demanded from me, amongst other things, an exact record of all the land belonging to the municipality, that is to say, how much under the plough, how much meadow land, and how many woods. As in addition to this many people were continually coming to me in my capacity as mayor, I had moved to another address. An old married couple had given me quarters for mself and my family. I therefore, at least had more room.

In the course of a control, a higher Russian officer came to me from Lötzen. In regard to the amount to be delivered up, and the provision of the Russian headquarters with victuals, he shouted at me: "If you don't see, that we get all we demand, then you will be put in the cellar on bread and water, and we shall chase your family out beyond the Oder".

Russians always continued to come to the village at night to plunder and to steal. In particular they looked for cows and horses, and took them away with them, whenever they found them. I think, they sold them to the Poles. A widower (A. R.),who had several children, and absolutely required the milk, hid his cow in a room. When the Russians found the cow all the same, and he did not want to give it up, they shot at him. He died shortly afterwards of his injuries.

Young women and girls were deported every day by the Russians to do forced labour in Russia. Some of them succeeded in escaping from the big assembly places, where they were driven together like cattle, because there was a great confusion there. They then crept back home through the woods, and remained in hiding.

In order to escape being raped, most of the women and girls hid themselves during the night in the fields.

One night there came some Russians to me, and demanded quarters. When I wanted to put them into the empty school and vicarage, they shouted at me, that they were the victorius Red Army, and wanted warm quarters. Before I could do anthing further in the matter, they smashed the windows with their rifle-butts, and entered into any house they liked. The people kept the doors locked, in order that the women and girls might have time to hide themselves, when the Russian knocked at the doors. The people, to whom the Russians had gone, thought I had sent them there for quarters, and were angry with me. Thus every night brought new horrors, shootings and the screams of tormented women. Everyone came to me for help and assistance, but what could I do? No-one is able to understand the horrors of these times without having experienced them himself.

The commanding officers of the neighbouring farm were once driving like mad through Eichmedien. They were absolutely drunk, and kept shooting to the right and left past the horses, so that these galloped as quickly as they could. A little German boy sat crying on the driver's box, and had to hold the reins. Everyone ran into the street to see, what was happening. When the Russians saw some women, they stopped and and tried to catch them. The women, however, had hidden themselves in time, and were not found. The Russians searched several houses, shot through doors, which were locked, and behaved themselves disgustingly. It is obvious, that it would have been futile to seek protection and help from such officers against plundering Russians.

On the 20. May it was Whitsuntide. In spite of our distress and fear, we collected in our church, in order to pray for our deported men, women and girls, and also for our men, sons and brothers, who were God knows where, and from whom we had for so long received no news. But the sight of our beautiful church was shocking. The altar-cloth was torn, the carpets had all been stolen. Nevertheless, one of us held Divine Service, and we prayed to the Lord for help and assistance.

While we were in the church the Russians took advantage of our absence, in order to search our dwellings, and to plunder them. In my house they stole big pictures and my mirrors from the walls. One day, while we were sorting out seed potatoes, there came some Russians with many orders and decorations on their breasts. They bawled at us and demanded to know, why we did not stand up and salute them. In the garden they saw my cock, and ran after him until they caught him. One of them said, he had a poultry farm somewhere, and required him for breeding. There was, however, a hole in the stolen sack and my cock escaped, but the Russians shot him, and took him with them.

Russians kept coming with trucks, and stole beds, mattresses, linen and clothes from the people. In order to pack the beds better they slit them up, while they were driving, and threw the feathers out. The green fields looked as if it had been snowing. They also sorted, what they had stolen, while they were driving off, and threw into the ditches, what was too old and what they did not like. Much of this stuff remained hanging on the trees, and presented a wretched sight.

For weeks certain women of Eichmedien were formed by the Russians into a labour commando. They were fetched in the morning, and brought back in the evening. They were allowed to take with them things, which they had found on the way in the ditches.

These women had to do all kinds of work in the neighbourhood of the village of Queden. Amongst other things, they had to bury the carcasses of animals, and the corpses of dead soldiers and civilians, which had become exposed, since the snow had thawed. They had to shovel earth into the mass graves of soldiers, which had become partially exposed after the thaw. Also they had to sort and pile up in heaps property of the German army, uniforms, equipment, etc. These things were all sent to Russia as booty. These women gave a description of all the terrible things they saw.

One night a horse of the farmer R. was stolen. Some Russians told him, that the Poles had the horse. He came to me, and begged me to help him, for his idea was that, with the Polish identity papers as mayor, the Polish authorities would be obliging to me. I was no longer so frightened, as we had now been living for half a year amongst Poles and Russians, and I also wanted to prevail on the Poles to give the horse back.

I went with the farmer with a horse and cart to Lötzen, as the competent Polish authorities were there, but in Lötzen we had really come to the right place — drunken bawling Poles were everywhere. One Polish authority sent me to the other. Everywhere there was only cynical smiling, and shrugging of shoulders. Finally a drunken Pole held a pistol before my face and said: "I always shoot Germans in the eyes". We then cleared out of Lötzen, and were glad, when we got back home unscathed. Men and women, who were healthy and not too old, were being continually deported to Russia for forced labour. The upper rooms of the house, in which the Russians had their local headquarters, were exceptionally small. The people, who were to be deported to Russia, were cooped up in these rooms during the night. There were generally so many of them, that there was hardly space for them in the narrow room. They then had to pass the night there, packed together like sardines. In the morning we saw, how these poor people were driven like cattle to Rastenburg, which was 10 kilometres away. The Russians rode on horseback or drove in horses and carts behind them.

Our neighbouring village Groß Bürgersdorf was like a place of the dead. The Russians had brought the last men and women to the neighbouring farm of H. to work. More and more Poles, came to the village and stole everything, they could lay hands on in this large and empty village. Domestic utensils, furniture, wood, etc., all such things the Poles, who kept arriving and had themselves nothing, took. The village was dead, where well-to-do farmers had for generations possessed their farms and their homes.

On the 3. July a commando of Russian civilians fetched 1190 sheep and cows away. These animals went as reparations to Russia. On this day there were again shootings, plunderings and rapings. (Amongst others a Mrs. Fr. B., who was 83 years of age). The women in the place were almost all pregnant, or had venereal diseases. These brutal Russians were all infected with dirty diseases. One father, who tried to defend his daughter from being raped, was beaten into unconsciousness. The daughter was then raped.

The Russians admitted more and more Poles into the district, which had been allotted to Poland. There came many Poles, who had previously worked as farm-hands for the German farmers. Although they had always had almost the same rights as a German worker, they were now treated, as if they had been deportees, and were given every kind of privilege. I had to give them a certificate, to the effect that they had worked 4 years for such and such a farmer. The Pole could then go, and choose a farm in the village which he liked, and this farm immediately became his property. No-one cared, what became of the old farmer or his wife. As the Poles, who arrived, had nothing, they collected what they wanted by stealing, and the Russians helped them.

At night time the Russians shot into the houses. When the women, thereupon, fled into the fields, the Poles took advantage of their absence to steal what they liked. They even stole the clothes, which the women had taken off when they went to bed, and which they had in their haste not had time to put on again. There was no protection or help, for the Russian commandants always had an excuse. The Germans were outlaws.

The Russians and Poles stole from one another. I know the case of a Pole, who had stolen a horse from the Russians, and who held it in a room of the house, where he was living, to prevent the Russians finding it. Cows were driven together by the Russians and brought to our farm, and then distributed to the people working there. The Russians demanded, however, that the cows must be paid for. In order to have a little milk and to live, everyone collected what he had hidden — watches, mantles, shirts, boots, etc., all this was given in payment.

The Russians sold such things again to the Poles. I had a cow, which gave 3 litres of milk a day, and this shows in what condition the animals were. When I went away later on, I received nothing for the cow, although I had paid for it. The Russian in question said, all the cows belonged to Headquarters. When the cows were grazing in the meadows, the few of us men, who were left there, had to keep watch. But what could we do, if several Russians or Poles came? If anyone had offered resistance, he would have been ruthlessly shot.

On the night of the 9. August I was again awakened by shots and screams. A crowd of drunken Russians were plundering and raping women and girls. I ran to the commandant; but he said, his machine pistol was out of order, and that he could do nothing. When I went towards the Russians I was beaten with whips. My wife, who was trying to help another woman, was struck with the butt of a pistol, and collapsed covered with blood.

On the 13. August armed Poles made a raid on the village. They were looking for arms, as they had heard, that children had thrown arms into the pond for putting out fire. The 13 year old boy G. H. had to dive into the water and look for the things, which were long rusty. He was arrested along with Mrs. P., and taken to Sensburg.

On the 15. August Mrs. M., who lived on an out of the way farm, was shot by Russians. Mrs. Dr. was frightfully beaten by Russians. Mrs. J., who was lying ill in bed, and could not run away into the fields, was raped by Russians. Things like that happened every night.

Many women and girls later on often spent the night in a room in my house, because the Russians and Poles no longer behaved in this violent way there, since I had become mayor.

It was evident, that the Russians wanted to get as much as possible out of the territory, before the Poles finally occupied it. The Russians had long since taken all machines and tractors away from our farm. During the last part of August the Russians brought 30 men with scythes, who had to mow the corn. These were men from Upper Silesia, who had already done this in many places. They were guarded, and had no idea what would happen to them.

The Russians collected all the people they could find to bring the corn in, und also the Poles had to help with horses and carts. As I knew the fields, the Russians had assigned me to distribute the work, and to supervise the harvesting. Although it was raining and the weather was bad, it had all the same to be brought in, for the Russians were in a hurry. In order to get things going quickly, the Russians collected more people than I could use. I sometimes had over 100 people in the field.

The Poles kept occupying more farms. As they observed, that the Russians were taking everything away, and leaving them practically nothing, they often quarrelled amongst themselves. The Poles refused to bring in corn for the Russians. The Russians then went and complained at the Polish Headquarters in Rhein, but the Russians and Poles began to shout at one another, and the former had to get reinforcements from Rastenburg.

As the Russians had stolen all the wireless sets, and we received no newspapers, we had no idea of what was going on in the world. It was not until the 2. September, that we heard of the German Capitulation and the Armistice. The Poles brought the news, with the first call upon us to resettle on the other side of the Oder and Neisse.

In the beginning no-one had thought of leaving our homes. Each of us had planted a patch of potatoes, which we wanted to harvest, in order to have a small supply for winter. We hoped, that next year things would be better, and never dreamt, that the Russians and Poles would remain here.

The Poles began to insist all the more on our departure. The Polish interpreter said to me: "Why do you keep on working? You've got to get out sooner or later." We also heard, that transports had already departed from other places to the west. Some people said, that they were really going to the *Reich,* and others said, they were being deported for work. One really did not know what was true.

On the 25. September all people, who were still in the village of G., had to leave their houses within a quarter of an hour. For 16 families there was only one farm-cart, so that they were practically unable to take anything with them. They received emergency quarters in the empty school. In front of the village of G. the Russians had put a turnpike with the picture of a death's head on it across the road. Woe to him, who should try to fetch wood or potatoes from his former dwelling! He would immediately be shot at with live ammunition. The farm was, therefore, to be a sharp-shooting place for the Russians.

I often went secretly and cautiously to the farm to see it once again. The farm, where I had worked for years, looked shocking. It was a miserable sight.

A dead desolate farm. Nothing but half famished rats and cats were running over the yards and paths, which were mostly overgrown with nettles and thorns.

The Poles now began to call upon us more sharply to depart for the west. They also called upon us to choose Polish citizenship, and to confirm this with our signature. The Poles promised everything to anyone, who would sign. He would be able to remain, and was to enjoy the same rights as a native Polish citizen. But, of course, no-one signed, because no-one wanted to become a Pole. Later on the Poles obtained such signatures by blackmailing methods. They locked people up and ill-treated them, until they were mentally tired out, and signed only in order to escape further persecution[445]). Such signatures were afterwards used by the Poles as propaganda.

I was also promised a farm by the Poles, and complete equality of rights, if I would sign for Poland. As I continued to refuse, I was relieved of my post as "mayor" on the 1. October. When the Poles fetched all my papers and documents I knew, that I had nothing good to expect in the future, and for the first time began to think of fleeing to the *Reich*.

I considered and thought everything over thoroughly, before I left our home. But there was no hope for us, for it would be our fate in the future to be slave-workers for Poland. The new Polish mayor told me, I ought to go away quickly, because the first to go would be treated better. The last ones, who did not want to leave their home at all, would be chased out by being whipped.

I then went to Rastenburg, in order to get information from the railway about the conditions and possibilities for departing. I received the necessary papers at once, as the Poles wanted to get the Germans out as quickly as possible.

In conclusion the author describes the preparation for, and the course of his expulsion.

No. 206

Eyewitness report of the farmer K. S. of Bulgrin,
district of Belgard in Pomerania
Original. 18. December 1947. 8 pages.
Printed in part.

The Polish settlers come in, and the German population are deprived of their property. Conditions of life and work in villages which had become Polish and on Russian administered estates

The author begins by observing, that he was wounded, and returned from a prisoner of war camp to his farm in Bulgrin in summer 1945 which is 12.75 hectares in area.

A short time after I had come home, Poles arrived in our village; first they came separately. They sized up the place, and settled on farms which they liked. We Germans had to give them first a room, with all the furniture, linen, etc., which was in it.

First of all the Poles behaved in a quite friendly way to us, which they, of course, did, in order to learn something about managing the farm. We thought, and the Poles confirmed this by what they said in this belief, that they would only be having asylum with us for a short time, as everything in Poland had been destroyed by the war. As we had no newspapers in our village, we were at the mercy of reports and rumors which the Poles circulated. Furthermore, our wireless sets had been destroyed by the Russians.

None of us had an idea at that time, that we should for the time being be allowed to remain in our native village, in order to work for these intruders, and manage the farms for them. For they had no idea of how to do this themselves.

After a short time the families of our "guests" also arrived. They had no baggage with them, which they pretended had been stolen from them, when they were on the way here. Of course, one room was no longer enough for them, and they regarded the clothing, linen, furniture and domestic utensils as their property, although these belonged to us.

There was soon a Polish police or militia organized in the village, consisting of young Poles, who had worked for German farmers during the war, and had generally been well treated. These young men, therefore, knew the conditions in the village very well, and subjected the Germans to chicanery, and plundered them.

Under the protection of this militia, the Poles ventured to commit more and more excesses against Germans. They drove us out of our beds at night, beat us, and took us away for days at a time, and locked us up. For instance, when the Germans were sleeping, there would suddenly come into the room a horde of Poles, for the most part drunk; the German families had to move, just as they were, into the rooms of the Poles. The Pole took over the dwelling of the German family with all the furniture, clothing, etc. in it. Inferior articles and articles of clothing, which had no value, were thrown after the Germans.

Thus our conditions of life steadily got worse. The Pole on my farm gave me 12 Pounds of rye a month, which he exactly weighed for my familiy of six persons. This we ground ourselves, and baked or made bread from it, and this, although we in the same year had harvested 40 hundredweight of rye from my farm. My wife and I had harvested from an area of over a hectare about 500 hundedweight of potatoes, which we had planted and looked after in the summer. In spite of this we were not allowed to take potatoes enough out of our cellar to feed ourselves and our children.

As there was a lack of bread, we were chiefly dependent on potatoes. There was scarcely any other kind of food for us Germans, as the Poles took the meat, fat and eggs for themselves.

With the exception of one cow per family the Russians had driven away all the cattle, when they marched in. However, the Russians and Poles consumed the milk and butter from this one cow, and especially so, as the Polish family was a large one, which continually received "visitors". The result was, that we had to work all the harder. We were got out of our beds during the winter at 6 o'clock in the morning, and also father, who was 70 years old, had to chop up fire-wood in the dark stable.

The Russians had already taken away most of the agricultural machines,, and the work was, therefore, much harder for us, we had to do most of it with our hands. The machines and apparatuses, however, which were still there, had been made unusable by the Poles in a very short time, as they did not know how to work them. For instance, the electric fuses were quite wrongly bridged over with wire which was too thick, the result being that the motors etc. connected to them soon burnt out, as a result of overcharging, and became unserviceable.

In the autumn of 1945 the Poles took possession of our old village church, in which our ancestors had been baptized and married. Everything inside the church, which reminded one of us Germans, amongst such things also the old memorial slabs for those who were killed in the wars of 1866, 1870/71 and 1914/18, were torn out and destroyed.

We had to do the clearing-up work around the church, and the new consecrating of the church was celebrated by the Poles with heavy drinking; there were also excesses committed against the Germans.

We Germans had to report, when we intended to hold divine service, which we could do in some room or another. However, it often happened, that those visiting such divine service were arrested, on the pretence, that they were holding a political meeting, and were, therefore, locked up for days and thrashed.

As our conditions of life kept getting worse, and it was clear, that we were confronted with famine, we moved in February 1946 to the neighbouring village, where there was a Russian command headquarters. The farming villages had been chiefly taken over by the Poles, whereas the Russians ran the big estates, the products of which they used for their troops.

Our move had to take place under cover of darkness, for if the Poles had noticed anything, they would have beaten, ill-treated and completely plundered us. We could only take away a small handcart full of what we had once possessed, and what was absolutely necessary in clothing and linen. It was impossible to take any furniture with us. Conditions under the Russians were somewhat better, especially where there was a commandant, who was to some degree friendlily disposed to the Germans, and we would in this way be able to bridge over the time better, until the final decision in regard to the frontiers of Eastern Germany was reached. We hoped and believed, that this would not be long. For we still hoped, that our home would not be separated from Germany; however, if we were with the Poles, we must expect to be expelled from one day to the other, if this suited them.

With the Russians, everyne who worked received the following victuals: 650 grammes of bread, 10 grammes of meal, 140 grammes of oats, 10 grammes of noodles, 25 grammes of meat, 10 grammes of bacon or substitute fat, 10 grammes of oil, 35 grammes of sugar, 30 grammes of fish, 30 grammes of salt, 4 grammes of coffee, and 920 grammes of potatoes and vegetables. These were the rations laid down, of which some were often not distributed, particularly such as oil, sugar, meat, bacon and noodles. There was never fresh meat and fish. The meat consisted only of bones. Each one received, for instance, a pig's bone, or an ox' bone or a bone from game, a general mix up and only offal, such as feet, heads, etc. The meat had been lying about for days unsalted, when we received it. Particularly in the hot season it already stank and it was impossible to eat it. The victuals were distributed for 5 days. Old people, sick ones and children, that is to say all those who could not work, received no rations, and one had to get them something to eat by stealing. As the estate had a German administrator, and Germans were also in charge of the granary, we often received from these people "a special rationing". As there was a lack of stuff for washing, it was inevitable, that many of us got lice, which it was extremely difficult to get rid of, in these circumstances.

In July I got typhus, although the Russians had innoculated us several times. I was sent to a hospital in Köslin, which was installed in a municipal building. The windows were not weather tight, and had only been repaired in a make-shift manner. For the Germans there was also a lack of medical attendance and medicaments. The medicaments, which had been left to the hospital by the Poles, were very expensive. For instance, an injection cost 150 zlotys. But we only got 10—20 zlotys, apart from our food, from the Russians monthly for our work.

The food in the hospital was very bad. Soup was made for the patients from offal such as fishbones, which were fetchel from a Russian kitchen. I was discharged from the hospital after 3 months, but as I had rheumatism, as a result of the typhus, and had to hobble with a stick, I was utterly incapable of working. On the 1. October my wife was discharged from her work, as the Russians, after the work in the fields had been finished, ruthlessly discharged all workers, whom they did not want for looking after the cattle, and for the work necessary on the farm. Thus winter was at hand, and we had nothing, and were without food, for we received no more rations from the Russians, as we did not work.

When we were discharged, the Russians told us, that they would bring us across the Oder, that is to say, that they would expel us, for the Poles would in any case soon do so. The Russians also said, that, as we had worked during the summer for them, they would see, that we got away, in order that we should not be totally plundered by the Poles. On the 14. November, the Russians put us into two tractor trailers. There were about 180 people, old and sick persons women and children. We were brought to Köslin. Here the Russians saw, that we departed the same day with a transport train, which was waiting. We were thus saved from having to remain for weeks in the camp at Köslin.

The author then describes how his expulsion proceeded, until he reached West Germany.

No. 208

Eyewitness report of O. M. of Stolp in Pomerania
Original. 7. August 1951. 14 pages.
Printed in part.

Under Russian rule in Stolp from March to August 1945

On the first pages of his report the author describes, how he fled with his family from the advancing Russians, how he experienced, at Virchenzin about 20 kilometres to the north-east of Stolp, the whole terror of the Russian invasion, and how he finally returned.

The whole of the inner town, bordered by Ring Street, the river Stolpe, Hindenburg Street, Bismarck's Square and Stephan's Square, had been burnt down. The only buildings still remaining were the chemist's shop on the market square, and Zeeck's stores on Stephan's Square. Also the beautiful

Church of St. Mary had been burnt down. In the church there was upholstered furniture, but the upholstery had been removed. The spire of the church had collapsed, apparently having been blown up. Also the Schloss Church had been burnt down. Other streets, such as Hindenburg Street, Töpferstadt, Blumen Street, Hospital Street and Schlawer Street were half burnt down, whereas the other parts of the town had only been partially destroyed. More than half of the town was in ruins. Before the entry of the Russians, there had been 50 000 natives and a further 50 000 evacuees and refugees there. The big business houses in Neue Tor Street on the market square and in Langen Street had been, together with their stocks, victuals and different working places, completely destroyed by the flames.

According to the reports of eyewitnesses, Russian incendiary commandos, led by officers, had gone from house to house, and set fire to them with incendiary bombs. Such vitally important goods had been destroyed out of hatred and stupidity. Almost all the windows of any other buildings still standing had been smashed by air pressure and heat. The Germans had before their retreat blown up all bridges, the water, power, and gas works. The town itself was not defended, but handed over to the enemy without fighting.

The most important thing for us was to find living quarters. We decided to remain at 12 Bütow Street. Our son had lived here, and we went into the house. All the doors and frames of the doors to the apartments were broken, and inside the apartments everything was upside down. Cupboards, wardrobes, mirrors, dressing tables and other furniture had been smashed up, the contents plundered, and what remained trampled on, and covered with filth. Some of the furniture had been thrown out of the windows. The books had been torn out of the bookcases, thrown on the floor, and trampled upon. The kitchens with pots and pans had been used as closets.

First of all we made the broken doors lockable, then we cleared up and arranged the apartment, so that civilized human beings could live in it. When we had finished everything, a Russian officer came, and requisitioned the apartment, compelling us to get out within an hour.

Now came a mob of Poles, who checked everything, and plundered and took away, what they liked. In front of the house there was a Russian sentry in the midst of a crowd of Poles; the latter again searched everything, and kept the best for themselves. In the course of this, we lost overcoats, suits, dresses and shoes. My wife lost her spectacles, and the clarionet of my son, who was a prisoner of war with the English, was stolen. We were able to throw some things out of the back window, and to pick them up again afterwards.

Now we moved to 9 Bütow Street, and established ourselves there. This house was also like a pig-sty, and we had to work 8 days, in order to make the apartment habitable. Again a Russian officer came, and threw us out. This time we were severely forbidden to take anything at all with us, and sentries were posted both in front of and behind the house to see, that nothing was taken out. All the other inhabitants of the house had to leave it along with us. Even sick and dying persons were ruthlessly put into the street. We were outlaws and without any kind of protection.

We now looked for another apartment, and found one at 23 Weiden Street. Here we were allowed to remain, although afterwards the Poles tried to get us out. The Russian command headquarters, however, had allotted this street to the Germans.

The question of food was a very serious one for the Germans, as during the first 3 months there was no distribution of any kind at all. Then for a few weeks 100—200 grammes of bread were distributed daily, but after 4 weeks this distribution ceased, as it was alleged there was no flour.

The Germans succeeded in getting a public kitchen established, which every second day distributed a plate of potato-soup; in this soup there was neither salt nor fat, but occasionally a little horse flesh. The people slowly died of starvation.

For the first 3 weeks we lived entirely from potatoes, and got catarrh of the stomach and bowels. We then restrained ourselves no further, but went into unoccupied houses, and looked for victuals. Occasionally something was found. My wife and daughter washed and ironed for Russian officers and soldiers, and tidied up their quarters; occasionally they were given a piece of bread or bacon.

But this was all as good as nothing for our hungry stomachs, and our physical condition became continually worse. My orginial weight of 190 pounds had already gone down to 160 during the war. I now began to lose 10 pounds every month. The weight of my wife had already gone down from 140 pounds to 90 pounds. I was hardly able to get up in the morning.

The inhabitants, who had returned to Stolp, had to go and be registered. The registration office was on the premises of the former firm of Boldt on Stephan's Square. We also went there. Several hundreds of men, women and children were lined up, and waiting to be let in. During the registration I was shouted at by a Jewish commissar and asked, if I had belonged to an organization of the Party. I showed him my card of the Union of Democratic Civil Servants and explained to him, that I had always been an opponent of Hitler. Then he calmed down and said, I was one of the few, who had voted against Hitler. In the yard I was prevented by a sentry from going away, and had to line up with a crowd of men and wait. Apparently we were to be deported. After an hour a new sentry came, and we requested him to let us go, as we were all between 60 and 80 years of age.

My wife was also taken out of a waiting queue, and had to go to Schmied Street, and carry bricks all day. Many women were shut up in cellars, often separately from their children, and then deported. Almost all men up to 60 years of age, and some who were older, were drawn up in columns, and sent to Russia. Also many women had to go there. Others were put into goods trains, and taken away.

The district court was surrounded by barbed wire and sentries. Here hundreds of Germans were packed together, we received a quarter of a litre of water soup per day, and waited to be cross-examined. Many became sick, and died, others were deported later on, and perished.

The Russians thought, that they caused the Germans suffering, when they compelled them to sweep the streets. For this was in their eyes apparently the lowest kind of work, and they delighted in humiliating the Germans in this way. Squads from 20—30 women swept the streets from morning to evening, even the road from Stolp to Kublitz, which was 3 kilometres long, was swept every day; "We will teach you culture", said the Russians.

It was in accordance with Russian culture, that all the refuse and filth were allowed to lie on the yards at the rear of the town, with the result, that the air was poisoned. The inhabitants of our house formed a community for street sweeping, and we were for 4 weeks continually sweeping Bütow Street from Weiden Street to the railway crossing. One day I was forced to go to the cattle market, put into the transport column, and had to fetch furniture, planks of wood and parts of machines away from a hut, and to pile them up 100 metres away.

After describing different kinds of work, which he had to do, the author continues:

The Russians were continually hunting for workers, and only those, who worked in a column, received potato-soup and 400 grammes of bread a day; and this they received only for themselves, but nothing for their families. Street sweeping, clearing up and similar occupations were not reckoned as work but as punishment. Therefore, no rations were given for this occupation, and those who had to do it were never told, where they were going to, and how long they would have to remain there. There were cases, where individuals soon returned, others after weeks, and some disappeared without a trace. In such circumstances, no-one was ready to do work voluntarily, and for this reason the people were pressed into work.

At 6 o'clock in the morning Russian time, that is to say 4 o'clock central European time, the Russians came with their German helpers into the dwellings, and searched for workers. Those, who could, hid themselves, for fear of being deported. Then it was announced, that early tomorrow all had to show up for registration. On the way there they were put into workers' columns, and led away. No-one went into the street, unless it was absolutely necessary, but locked himself in his house.

Day and night the Russians came into the houses, seeking for women, strong liquor and watches. The women were in permanent fear, and when the Russians kept knocking continuously at the door, the women ran away, and hid themselves. Those, who lived on the ground floor, jumped out of the windows. Sometimes they were able to escape, but they were often caught, and raped. Even women of 70 years of age were ill-treated and raped by drunken beasts of men.

It was worst at night time. In Bütow Street I was the only man in the house, and had to open the door. If this took too long for the Russians, then they shouted and threatened to shoot me. I had to sleep in my clothes, in order to open the door quickly. A baker friend of mine was shot at his breakfast table, because he was not able to give strong liquor. Later on such kinds of murder were forbidden, but the molesting did not cease completely. In the restaurant of the slaughter house in Bütow Street a so-called transport company had taken up its quarters. It was led by Russian officers, assisted by Polish or Latvian auxilary personnel, and had hundreds of German workers, mostly women. These latter dissembled machines from the works and workshops still available, removed working equipment, tools, and took out of private dwellings upholstered furniture, beds, mattresses, sewing machines, watches, pictures, domestic utensils, and all sorts of things.

Further, railway plants were dismantled, boilers brought away, and likewise agricultural machines and appliances. The smaller parts were sorted out in the huts of the former German army, and piled up. Here carpenters were occupied in packing fragile things into cases. These cases were sent to Russia. In Stolp many owners of horses and carts were given the necessary workers, and instructed to search the whole town, and load everything, which was useful, and bring it to the station.

Among other things, the whole provincial railway was dismantled, and sent to Russia. This railway connected Stolp with Budow, Dargeröse and Schmolzin, and was of great value. Not only the rails were brought away, but also all the signal and office equipment, the tools, the spare parts and all other such material.

In this way, the whole of East Germany was completely plundered, and stuff worth milliards taken to Russia. What had not been burnt was stolen. We called these people "Messrs Rob and Steal". In about three months Pomerania had been emptied, and the Poles could come.

After the factories, the workshops and the dwelling houses had been emptied, the Poles came. From the beginning of July 1945 hundreds of Poles came with every train to Stolp. They had been told, that Germany was rich, and that they would find all they needed. Now they came in crowds with empty trunks, but were bitterly disappointed, that they found so little.

The Russian local headquarters had ordered, that the part of the town, to the east of the river Stolpe, was to be evacuated for the Poles. As the garden city on the outskirts of the town had been evacuated for Russian officers, the Germans had to get on with the few houses, which were still inhabitable. They were continually packed closer together into a narrower space, and were even then continually molested by the Poles. The Germans often had to request the help of Russian soldiers and the Russian local headquarters, in order not to be driven out of their dwellings by the Poles.

The picture of the town began to change quickly, for in the main streets Polish shops were opened, in which goods were offered for sale, which had been bought in Poland, or stolen in Germany. Wherever the Poles lived, they hung out their white and red flags.

As free trade had been again introduced immediately after the entry of the Russians, a 4 pound loaf cost 60 zlotys, 2 pounds of mead 200 zlotys, and 1 pound of bacon or butter 200 zlotys. A zloty was reckoned as equal to a Reichsmark. But the Polish shops did not accept German money, and anyone, who wanted to buy, had first of all to get zlotys. The Germans sold everything, which they could possibly spare, such as linen, carpets and such-like things, in order to have enough to eat for once. As a German skilled worker, who was occupied by Poles, earned about 120 zlotys a month, he could buy 2 loaves of bread for his month's wages.

Some of the Poles went into the country, expelled the farmers from their farms, and took them over themselves. In some cases the farmers could remain as labourers. In July all landed property, both in the town and in the country, had to be reported to the Polish authorities, and was nationalized. The same was done in the case of the workshops, and also of furniture on the premises of Germans, who had fled. The house owners were substituted by managers of blocks, who were responsible to the Russians and the Poles, and were used for subjecting the Germans to chicanery.

Further, the relations between the Russians and Poles were very bad. The Russians regarded the Poles with contempt, and day and night there was fighting and shooting between them. The Russians and the Poles collaborated in politics but the individuals could not bear one another.

In the year 1944 the autumn sowing had been punctual and thorough, and the crop was afterwards a success. After the entry of the Russians, in the beginning of March 1945, there was for the most part no spring sowing, particularly for the large estates it was impossible to carry out the sowing. For the owners of large farms with very few exceptions had been deported or shot. In the neighbourhood of Stolp only the owner of the farm of Kussow survived, but he had been very badly maltreated, and looked after the sheep. His wife worked in the cow-sheds, and their dwelling house had been burnt down.

A part of the farmers was dead or had fled, so that the arable land of the small farmers could only be partly worked on, as the horses had been taken away, and the cattle brought to Russia. A part of the cattle had been taken over by the Occupying Authority, who then had the milk made into butter and cheese by the dairies for the troops. There were absolutely no pigs nor small cattle left. Even the fish ponds had been emptied, and the fish eaten.

In the exclusively rural villages, the land had been tilled and sown to some extent, and a good half of it was in order.

The Russian occupation fed themselves from the stocks, and took everything they required from the barns, without asking. They opened the potato-pits, took the potatoes away, also took the bacon out of the larders, and used up all other kinds of victuals, so that even the farmers often had nothing more to eat in the summer. The horses of the Russians grazed on the meadows, the result was, that no meadow hay could be harvested.

When the winter grain was ripe, the large fields of the farms were harvested, the harvest immediately threshed, and sent away to Russia.

Also the Poles participated in this work, and carried off as much as they could.

In this way the agricultural population was beginning to be threatened by famine. One can understand, under such circumstances, what the prospects of the town population were.

Before the entry of the Russians, the town of Stolp was one of the cleanest towns in Germany. It had a tramway since 1910 and a good railway connection with Stolpmünde, which was about 18 kilometres away and with the Baltic coast. The climate was healthy and comparatively mild.

The health of the population got very quickly worse under the domination of the Russian Occupation. There were the three following reasons for this:

1) Hunger. During the first three months of the Russian Occupation there was no distribution of victuals. Then for 5 weeks 100—200 grammes of bread were distributed daily for each person, but then this distribution ceased, as it was alleged there was no flour. Then, owing to the influence of leading Ger-

mans, a public kitchen was established, which every other day distributed a plate of potato-soup, without salt and without fat. This distribution simply delayed the process of dying of hunger. The people were only like shadows, and limped painfully on sticks through the streets, in order to fetch their soup.

2) The town had been prepared for defense, and anti-tank trenches surrounded the different parts of the town. In these trenches was water, and everything conceivable had been thrown into them, so that a mass of filth caused an evil stench throughout the town. On the back yards of the houses lay furniture and other things, which had been thrown out of the windows. In addition to that, refuse and filth, in particular around the barracks and their surroundings, were breeding places for all kinds of vermin. In summer there were billions of flies, which brought all kinds of diseases into the town. Over the town there hovered a reeking cloud of poisonous air.

3) Most of the doctors of Stolp had poisoned themselves, and the rest had either been killed or had fled. The lady doctors had been raped and taken their lives. There was only one doctor, whose name was Heiligendorff, still practicing, but he had not the necessary medicaments. There were indeed a few Russian and Polish doctors practising, but also these had not the necessary instruments and medicaments. With one exception the chemist's shops had all been burnt down.

There soon arose infectious diseases, such as spotted typhus, enteric fever, dysentery, diphtheria, etc.; they developed into epidemics. Whereas in normal times out of a population of 50 000 3—4 died daily, the mortality among a population of 30 000 rose to between 60 and 80 per day. The dead were simply loaded in carts, and buried in mass graves. As no serious steps were taken, it was clear, that all the inhabitants of Stolp would be dead in about a year.

In the night before the entry of the Russians, from the 7. to the 8. March 1945, a huge number of people died in Stolp. Almost all intellectuals, and also many workers, officials and craftsmen poisoned or shot themselves. Many drowned themselves, and others hanged themselves. Then the Russians came, overfell the women and girls, who had remained behind, raped them, and murdered many. The Russians then went into the houses, and demanded strong liquor. When they were not given this, they beat to death or shot many men.

The author now gives a numerous list of persons, whom he knew himself, and who committed suicide, or were murdered by the Russians.

It is not possible to make a reliable statement on the exact number of the dead in Stolp.

I estimate, that of 50 000 inhabitants about 10 000 perished, of these perhaps 1000 committed suicide. A further 1000 were shot or beaten to death, and likewise many perished on the flight by way of Stolpmünde, Gotenhaven and Danzig; most of these were drowned at sea. It is to be assumed, that 3000 people were deported, of whom only a very few survived.

The author now gives his personal views on his experiences and a detailed description of his expulsion in August 1945.

No. 217

Report of the former district mayor[446]) of Breslau
Attested copy. 1946.

The general situation in Breslau in the course of the events from the capitulation, during the Polish invasion, and up to the establishment of the Polish civil administration, and the conditions under Polish domination until November 1945. The relations between Russians, Poles, and the German population

When the capitulation of Breslau and the end of the war was announced, the population began to breathe more freely. Indeed there was the great riddle and unknown quantity, that is to say, the immediate contact with the enemy of yesterday and the victor of today, who was regarded by many as the liberator from the yoke of the Nazis, and that in particular by the anti-Fascists and the few surviving Jews. Was the victor really a half savage Asiatic, as he was pictured by the Nazi propaganda in terrifying descriptions, and as a creature who plundered, and raped women and girls? It is known, that the propaganda of the Nazis was libelous and lying. But the answer to our question is: The victor was and was not so.

He, who wants to understand this ambiguous answer, must know the Russian and his mental and spiritual life, as they have been repeatedly described to us by Tolstoi and Dostojewski, as grown-up children, at the same time capable of cruelty, and totally unreliable in their thinking and acting. The contempt of human life is just as characteristic of the mentality of the Russians as their disregard of every form of personal property.

It is necessary, in order to understand all this, to have experienced, how a Russian soldier shared his last bread with German children, or how a Russian driver loaded an old woman, without being requested to do so, on his truck, and brought her home with her half broken-up hand-cart. But it is also necessary to have experienced, how the same man lay in ambush in a cemetery, in order to attack women and girls, and to plunder and rape them.

Such things happened daily, and likewise plunderings on a large scale. These things were forbidden by the high command, and the Russian police often intervened, when called upon by the Germans for help. There were even executions, but this only demonstrates the sense of discipline of the military leaders.

The German population regarded these things at the beginning as what they were, not as hostile acts, but as the spontaneous expression of the intoxication of victory by men, who had fought to take the town for 3 months, in a bitter fight from house to house.

The fact that such acts were also committed against Jews or anti-Fascists shows, that the final aims of the war were also not generally known among the Russians; or we may say, that craving for pleasure and property overcame such men, in spite of their consciences. Only in this way is it possible to explain, that such things continued to happen many weeks later, when the fighting troops had already been substituted by others.

The majority of the Soviet people, who personally possess nothing, has no notion of the significance of private property, it is, therefore, understandable, that such property in a foreign country is disregarded and not recognized. The Russians declared quite openly and repeatedly, that every German worker was a capitalist. In order to explain to the Russian soldiers, how it was that the German worker possessed so much property, it was declared, that all this property had been stolen from others.

A very bad impression was made by the fact, that immediately after the capitulation, all wireless sets had to be handed over, without consideration of whom the owner was. In this way the whole German population was isolated from the world. At the beginning such a measure would have been explained by the fact, that the fighting in other parts of the Reich had still not been decided. The measure was, however, for weeks and months carried out with even more severity.

Among the positive measures of the Power of Occupation must be mentioned, that the anti-Fascist elements were re-constituted in the so-called "Anti-Fascist Liberation Movement" and in the "Jewish Committee."

The German district mayors, who were appointed by the military commandants, established the contact between the military government and the German population, and this applied both to subordinate and medium levels; for there was nothing remaining of German authorities and administrations, and nothing was re-established.

There was no provision of victuals, except a very inadequate distribution of bread, according to which each person was to receive 2 pounds every 10 days. It often happened, that the distribution could not take place, when the flour or bread had been seized by Russians or Poles. The huge stores of victuals in Breslau, which according to the estimation of experts would have been sufficient to feed the population for 2 years, were mostly plundered by the Russian troops, partially requisitioned by the military government, and finally also in a small degree plundered by the German population. Not only was the arrival of the Russians as liberators a great disappointment for us anti-Fascists, but in addition to this came the influx of Poles. At the beginning these were the numbers of young Poles in and around Breslau, who consisted partly of prisoners of war, and partly of "D.P.s".

In addition to the excesses committed by members of the Russian occupation forces, there were also those of armed youths. These excesses were committed out of quite different motives, which we anti-Fascists were thoroughly able to understand, as long as we were not the victims. For considering all the suffering, which had been inflicted on the Polish people by the Nazis, it was evident, that hatred and desire for revenge must get the upper hand, in the case of a people passionate as the Polish. However, the Russian military administration showed energy in the matter, and the Russian Headquarters often rendered assistance and protection against acts of violence on the part of the Poles, when requested to do so.

These armed youths were followed in a few weeks by masses of civilians of both sexes, who absolutely overflooded Silesia and Breslau, and continually drove the Germans together into a narrower space. Within a short time they took possession of all that remained of the economy, they appoined trustees for the butchers' and bakers' shops, which were still doing business, and also took over the administration of the former *Reich* railway in Silesia.

The number of protests and complaints lodged by the German population with the Russian military government increased continually. These complaints were submitted to the local commandant in the course of the daily talks with the mayors. The commandant had these things recorded and promised help; but when fresh complaints were submitted after a few days, the old ones had not yet been settled.

When the Poles seized apartments or whole houses, and allowed the Germans only to take from 20—30 lbs of their belongings away with them, the Russian Headquarters declared, that the Poles had no right to do this, and must leave these dwellings again. As a matter of fact, nothing happened.

When the Poles, who had in the meanwhile taken possession of the chemist shops, raised the prices ten times the previous ones, the Russian Headquarters declared, that the chemists had no right to do this, and that every chemist would be put into prison, who demanded higher prices than had been previously fixed by the government. One chemist was actually put into prison, but that did not alter the fact, that the high prices still continued to be demanded, without anything being done.

All such measures, whether in the form of sheer terrorization or economic pressure, were felt by the population to be unjustified and undeserved. The people demanded, that those, who actually were responsible for all the misery, should be prosecuted. As a matter of fact, the mass of Nazis had got off scot-free, apart from leaders down to the rank of *Ortsgruppenleiter;* they were even employed in Polish administrative offices and businesses, or they lived well from what remained from the good businesses they had formerly had.

Meanwhile the cry of the population for food was getting continually more urgent; for on the one hand the whole male and female population between 15 and 65 years of age was forced to work, and on the other hand there was no rationing of bread, which could in any way be regarded as adequate. The stocks collected by the civilian population during the siege had been consumed, or had fallen into the hands of the Russians or Poles. It is true, that a public market had been established, and that shops selling victuals had been opened, but no one could buy there, who had not Polish money.

At this market it was possible to sell clothing and other utility articles for Polish money, or to barter them for victuals. The valuation of the articles sold was, in proportion to the prices for victuals, of a ratio, which must quickly lead to the sell out of the German population. Here is an example: two pounds of butter, which cost 4 marks before the war, was given for a pair of new shoes, which had cost 15 marks before the war. It was, however, only by means of such sales, that the Germans were able to earn barely enough to exist.

On the 1. July 1945 the Poles officially took over the whole civil administration, and the German district mayors were made subordinate to Polish civilian commissars. A very loyal collaboration developed which inspired the greatest hopes, particularly on the part of the anti-Fascists.

The conduct of the Polish population, however, did not change, but now began to become really arrogant and aggressive. The arbitrary measures of individuals were now sanctioned by the administration.

Even before Polish business people had not accepted German currency (no German business people were left) and the Polish zloty had been at the same time reduced to one hundredth of its previous purchasing value. It is true, that Reichsmarks were still taken in payment, but only at a devaluation of one-hundred and twentieth to one-hundred and fiftieth. For instance, a loaf weighing 3 lbs, which had previously cost 30 pfennigs, now cost 40 marks; a pound of meat 100 zlotys or 150 marks, etc. And this was not on a black market, but in normal business and market trading.

This devaluation of the mark was particularly disastrous in the case of medicines, as the demand for medicaments was rising enormously in proportion as the feeding of the population got worse. The first cases of hunger typhus occurred. Even although the German doctors treated the people without demanding fees, how would it be possible to obtain medicaments at such impossible prices? A single aspirin tablet cost 8—10 zlotys or 10—15 marks, a small bottle of cough mixture for children cost 50 marks. If such complaints were submitted to the civilian commissar, he answered, that the people still had sufficient things to sell.

When complaints were submitted, that there had still been no distribution of victuals, although the population was called upon to work without break, the answer was, that the issue of food coupons was being prepared but that first of all new lists of the population must be drawn up. When the new lists had been handed in, we heard nothing for 3—4 weeks, and then new lists were again demanded, as the old ones were alleged to be obsolete or to have been mislaid. In this way the district mayors and the population were put off from month to month.

In the meanwhile new stores were springing up, like mushrooms from the ground; everywhere there was an abundance of foodstuffs, baker's and butcher's shops were overstocked, as in the time of deepest peace, the restaurants offered a choice of foods and drinks, as we had not seen it even in peace times. Farmers wives went from house to house offering for sale milk, cream, butter and eggs, but the population was all the same hungry. Who could buy these things, for the prices had not changed in spite of the enormous supply? Neither Germans, and strange to say, not even the Poles, which was the ironical part of the matter. Only he could buy, who had something to sell, or who was clever enough to participate in this general trade, and to earn money by doing so.

Whereas the Germans were forced to work without earning wages, the Poles on principle did not work, because they could not earn anything by doing so. At least, it seemed to them, that the amount of work, they would have to do, was not in a profitable proportion, to what they would receive. The officials and employees were preferentially treated in regard to the distribution of rations, which was directly carried out by their departments. But when one considers, that the maximum pay, which for instance the city president of Breslau received, was 1500 zlotys or 8 pounds of butter, then it is not difficult to calculate, what the other wages were like.

It was, therefore, obvious that everyone did more or less clean business, as far as he could. A favourite means employed by the Poles for getting money consisted, in the seizure of dwellings. A Polish official or employee took with him two members of the militia, with whom he had promised to share the business, went into houses and apartments, and chose for himself the best one he could find. Then he had the occupants thrown out by the militia men, they were given a time limit, generally of half an hour, and according to the generosity of the respective Pole were allowed to take with them 20, 30 or 50 pounds weight of their belongings. Then, after having given a share to the two militia men, the Pole established himself in the apartment, went to the Polish Housing Department, and stated he had found quarters for himself. Then he received an official certificate to use the dwelling as his own.

Now he immeditely proceeded to sell everything in the dwelling, which he did not need for living. After that he sold the latter to someone else, either someone, who was really looking for a dwelling, or to someone like himself, who continued to sell everything, including the furniture. The Polish administration knew of these things, and allowed them to go on. In the case of a major action for evacuating dwellings for Poles, it often happened, that even the Russian military police assisted. It is not surprising, that there was also corruption in this connection. Numerous Polish officials, who had been transferred from the interior of Poland to Breslau, applied for leave, and did not return to duty, simply because they did not get enough to eat.

A particularly dark side of the new Polish history was the militia, which has been already frequently mentioned, and the robbery and plundering, which has already been mentioned. There were Polish business people, who had actually hired detachments of militia, and sent them out to rob. The following case is known to me on good authority. A Polish manufacturer of sugar had hired a group of militia men. If anyone came and offered him raw material, mostly sugar, he negotiated with this person, but sent him away without doing any business. Then he assigned someone to follow him, and make certain where he lived. When that had been done, he sent his militia men in the night, who simply seized all the goods found there, without considering, whether the owners were Poles or Germans.

The administration distributed to the German railway workers one pound of bread a week, and a sauerkraut soup or gruel at noon. These men were forced to work for the Polish railway administration, and were not allowed to give up their work, because of no pay and insufficient rations. The Polish railwaymen, on the other hand, received special food from kitchens, which had been specially established for them.

The medical treatment of the population became disastrous. Typhus spread more and more, and on many houses one saw the yellow flag, which prohibited the house to be entered. During the first months of the Polish administration, there was a Social Office established, which, after days of effort, issued a free medical treatment coupon also for Germans, who were sick. This coupon entitled the holder to be treated without fee by a doctor, and in the most serious cases to be taken in by a hospital. But what was the use of this free treatment coupon, when the holders were not in a position to purchase the necessary medicaments. Moreover, the hospitals were forbidden to give medicaments to Germans, who had been taken in on the ground of a free treatment coupon.

These free treatment coupons, however, were soon abolished, and the German population was left in a state of chaos, in regard to medical care. What German and Jewish doctors did during this time to alleviate the sufferings of these tormented people deserves the very highest praise. In this connection it is typical, that the Polish authorities prohibited the departure of German doctors from the country.

We anti-Fascists felt utterly betrayed. Had we not promised the population liberation from the yoke of the Nazis? And what had they got in exchange? Jews and anti-Fascists were just as much outlaws in the eyes of the authorities as others. Here is an example, for many other such cases: On one occasion, when seizing dwellings, the Poles chose the dwelling of a well-known ant-Fascist. When requested by the district mayor not to seize this dwelling, and rather to take the dwelling of a Nazi, the Poles declared, that Fascists or anti-Fascists did not make any difference to them.

When the district mayor, thereupon, declared, that he would report the matter to the Polish and Russian commandants, he was threatened by the militia with the words: "We'll finish you off." When the complaint in question was actually made to the Polish and Russian authorities, the only result was, that this anti-Fascist was allowed to take more of his personal belongings with him than other persons.

The few German Jews, out of the different concentration camps in Auschwitz as far as Mauthausen, who had come back to their homes in Breslau were refused rations by the Polish administration just like all other Germans. They also had no means of supporting themselves, as trade was exclusively in the hands of Poles or Polish Jews, who had often even uttered hostile expressions against the German Jews.

There was nothing for them but to emigrate again. The Jewish Committee in Erfurt, organised this, after having before organized the return of the occupants of concentration camps to Silesia and Breslau. Some omnibusses were sent from Erfurt, at intervals of 15 days, and brought the Jewish emigrants into the district of the Reich.

After four transports had gone through, the omnibusses were held up on the Russo-Polish frontier at Görlitz, and they were not allowed to proceed into Polish territory. All protests and negotiations with the Polish and Russian military authorities were of no avail, until, after two months, at about the beginning of November 1945, the Polish administration agreed to arrange railway transport, on condition that the *Reich* supply the wagons.

Towards the end of November, the first transport departed. It consisted of ordinary goods wagons, in which men, women and children, aged and sick people had to remain eight days, without heating and without hot food, until they reached their destination. That was the fate of the German Jews and anti-Fascists, who had returned from the National Socialist concentration camps, and this was under the Polish administration, which was tolerated by Russia.

The author expresses the view, that the relations between Russians, Poles and Germans must be considered from a psychological and political view-

point, in order to understand all, that was happening in the territories of East Germany. He tries to illustrate the Polish mentality by the following conversations, which he gives as examples.

I had a conversation about professional questions of the future with a highly intellectual Pole. This man was an engineer, who had not only studied at Polish universities, but also at the university of Oxford. When I told him, I intended to work again in the timber industry in the mountainous parts of Silesia, he said the following: „Don't do that, but see, that you get out of Silesia, as soon as possible. You know too little of the Poles, and their character. The Pole has such an extreme national feeling, that he will tolerate no minority where he is; he will always oppress it."

The man, who spoke in this way, was a national or congress Pole, as one says, and he must have been able to judge his compatriots. He also knew, that I was a Jew, but as I did not speak Polish, I was for him a German. In this respect the Pole recognizes no difference between Germans and German Jews.

The author then repeats an anti-Semitic view expressed by this Pole, in which the latter approved of the liquidation of Jews in Poland, by the National Socialists during the war.

This view is not only the view of a single individual, but shows the attitude of the overwhelming majority of the Polish people toward the Jewish problem. Or how shall we interpret the challenge of the chief of the Jewish community in Breslau to the Polish authorities, when he shouted out, at a public meeting of the Zionists, the following words: "We are given no food, we are afforded no possibility of supporting ourselves, we are even prevented from leaving the country. What remains open to us than open fight."

My second very characteristic conversation, I had a short time before my departure, in my capacity as district mayor with our Polish civil commissar. This man was also an academic person and very educated, and according to his functions ranked immediately after the city president. We talked about my pending departure, and he expressed the view, that I could congratulate myself, about being able to depart. I was for a moment amazed at these words, and asked him why. Then he exploded, and I was afraid, that any outsider might hear his words, for he said: "You are an intelligent person, and you see what is happening here, for this is not a state and not an administration, it's a pigsty." As I did not feel justified as a German in criticizing the Polish state and the Polish people, I wanted to be mild in my remarks, and said: "Don't you think, that the Polish people is a victim of circumstances, and is being crushed between the millstones of high politics, and does not know how to extricate itself?" He, thereupon, said very clearly: "No, that is not the case, it was the same with us in the past." It was impossible for me to contradict this remark, or add anything to it.

I would now add the strange experience, which I had, when the first secretary of the same civil commissar, who was also a Pole far above the average, one day asked me, after he had heard of my pending departure, whether I could not help him to get into the territory of the *Reich.* When I replied, that he had a good position, he simply answered: "That will not last."

All these details, however, do not give us the key to what is at the back of all these things. The Pole is a nationalist, a chauvinist and a militarist. He has all the characteristics, which seem to us typical of the Nazis.

All this does not alone explain the character of the Poles and their attitude towards the Germans. There is a decisive factor, and that is Russo-Polish relations and, therefore, politics. The Russians do not hate the Germans. The Germans were their defeated enemies, and the war was finished. Apart from single individuals, who themselves or whose families suffered at the hands of the Germans, there is no hatred. But the Russian despises the Pole, although it is not necessary to say, that he hates him, although I have often enough heard very definite remarks of this kind from Russians; and, at the time when Breslau had a strong Russian garrison, it was quite common for Poles and Russians to murder one another; it may, of course, have been, that alcohol caused both the Poles and Russians to be out of control.

When the Russians first knew, that Breslau and Silesia were to become Polish, they set whole rows of houses on fire, because they were enraged, that they had sacrificed their lives to conquer this land and city, and that they were to be deprived of the fruits of their victory, by a crowd of robbers, who behaved themselves, as if they were the victors, but in a way, in which victors would never have done. Even weeks later after things had quieted down, one occasionally saw a house burst into flames, which had been set fire to by the Russians.

What did the simple Russian know of the high policy being pursued at Potsdam, and what did he know about the fact, that Breslau, just as other cities of Silesia, and the whole land were being left to the Poles, according to decisions taken at Potsdam, and had to be left to them, because Russia had claimed old Polish territory, as far as the so-called Curzon Line. What did he know about the fact, that all the Silesian cities and towns, and the whole land of Silesia, which he had conquered and now had to leave to the Poles, were being so thoroughly stripped by his own military administration of everything usable as foods, of domestic and slaughter cattle, of industrial and agricultural machines down to the very last scythe, that the farmer, who had to harvest the winter grain, was forced to do so with sickles, scissors and flails, just as had been done a hundred years before, or that he would otherwise have no grain to bake bread.

When I was assigned by the Russian military administration to manage the harvest, and wanted to procure scythes and sickles for columns of German harvesters, I drove along a road 15 kilometres long, and visited more than 5 villages, which were scarcely damaged but completely deserted; all that I succeeded in finding were two sythes, three sickles and two hay-rakes.

I do not know, how much domestic and slaughter cattle were in the rural district of Breslau before the war. As this rural district, however, had the very best soil and contained the very best run farms, the numbers must have gone into the tens of thousands. How many cattle there were now there, I heard authentically from the representative of the *Landrat*, viz. 20 cows and 15 horses.

One can drive through the country for 15—20 kilometres around Breslau, and one sees nothing but deserted and destroyed villages, no human being, and not one head of cattle. The whole land is a deserted wilderness, and one sees today nothing but grass as high as a man, where before there had been waving cornfields further than one could see or enormous potato and turnip fields, which had been worked on with steam ploughs and tractors. Into this burnt out and drained country the Poles came, driven away from their own soil, from their own towns and dwellings, most of which had during the war been better preserved than the German towns, which had been subject to air raids and artillery fire. Could one expect the feeling of the Poles to be friendly to the Germans, who had caused the war, and organized the first expulsion of the Poles from their homes, even although some of these things were a result of the chauvinist measures of the Poles between 1920—1922. Finally, the Germans were the cause of, if not responsible for what was now happening to the east of the Curzon Line.

Moscow had carried things too far against the Poles; this was known and felt and, therefore, nothing at all was done to restrict the Polish chauvinism or, on the other hand, to help the Germans. How were things helped, when Russian military police at the beginning took action against Polish plunderers, or when Russian officers and soldiers tore the white armbands from the arms of the Germans, which they had to wear by order of the Poles, in order to show, that they were Germans, with the remark: "You need not wear them." These were spontaneous expressions of sympathy with the conquered, but did not amount to actual help. Moreover, the Poles were victors, and it was, therefore, impossible to be officially against them.

Politically, things were clearly proceeding in the direction of an increasing influence of Communism in Poland, for Russia knew very well, that it could only win the people and the country for itself, by means of the Communist form of government, but the Pole is not very susceptible to this. He is and remains what he was, a nationalist. It is only in this way possible to explain, how the majority of Poles believe, that the present friction can only be ended, by an armed conflict, and look to the West with this hope. They do not grasp the fact, that this would also mean the end of Europe.

The German tragedy in the East is, however, meanwhile continuing, and will be finished in a few months.

No. 224

Eyewitness report of the former teacher I. F. of Liegnitz
in Lower Silesia
Original. Summer 1948. 41 pages. Printed in part.

Return home after the capitulation, expulsions from Silesia before the Potsdam Agreement, the general state of affairs, and the conditions of life of the German population of Liegnitz and its surroundings, under Russian and Polish domination until May 1946

The authoress was in January 1945 evacuated from Breslau to Mährisch Trübau, and describes in the first pages of her report the usual occurrences, *which were everywhere accompanied by plundering and raping, after the Russian troops marched in.*

The war was at an end, and the guns were silent, and one might have assumed, that one could return home with some degree of safety. It is true, that there were bad rumours about plundering, and ill treatment suffered by those who returned. It was also rumoured, that refugees were forcibly put into camps, and not allowed to use the railway. It was, however, impossible for us to remain where we were, and we departed at the end of May, the train starting 5 hours late, from Mährisch Trübau in pouring rain. It was impossible to obtain any kind of information anywhere, because the whole of the railway personnel were Czechs. In Böhmisch Trübau we had to get out of the train again, and we were all driven like cattle to a small farm away from the station. We Germans cowered closely packed together, and waited with trembling hearts for the night. It was as still as death all around us, and one felt, that a misfortune was approaching.

It began to get dark, and Russians and Czechs were watching us. Our hearts stood still for fear, and then one pocket torch after another suddenly began to flash. The Russians and Czechs made their way through our midst, and stole whatever they wanted. One woman was snatched up, and dragged into the bushes. One heard the piercing shrieks of her children, then another woman was snatched up, but she resisted, screamed and hit out. But it did not help her. Next to us stood a clergyman, who, in addition to his baggage, had to give up his overcoat and his jacket.

They flashed their torches in the face of every female, and everyone they took a fancy to had to go into thes bushes. The tears, screaming and begging, I shall never forget all my life.

At 3 o'clock in the morning this torment was over, and we were allowed to return to the platform. The baggage of five women was lying about. Where had they taken these unfortunale creatures? But we could do nothing for them, for everyone had to see, how he could save himself. Our journey proceeded slowly in small stages.

The Czechs refused to take us further by train, so we had to continue on our way by walking. After several days we reached Glatz, where we found German railway personnel. We now felt absolutely sure, that we would reach home safely, but we had made a great mistake. We got as far as Reichenbach-Eulengebirge with great difficulties, then the railway connection was completely severed.

I spoke to several Poles, who had been driven from home by the Russians who said, that they should go to Silesia, which had been completely evacuated by the Germans, and work on the fields to prevent them lying fallow. The German towns of Glatz and Reichenbach were, however, still full of Germans, and this, although the Russians had requisitioned houses and whole streets. The Poles and the Czechs forced their way into the territories still occupied by Germans.

With great difficulty we reached Schweidnitz some days later. Contrary to what had happened in Reichenbach, this town had been very much damaged, but all the same, the majority of the population had returned, and there were even some shops open, where one could pay with German money. We remained 2 days in the town, and a druggist took us into his house, and was very kind. The Russians had behaved wildly here, and were still doing so. They rushed everything away on trucks, which they could lay their hands on.

Then we continued our way on foot as far as Striegau. Here we couldn't go any further, as we were too exhausted. The appearance of the town was terrible, and about the half had been burnt down. We became discouraged, but we dragged ourselves as far as the Sisters' Home, and were taken in by Sister Charlotte, whom we knew. She told me, that the Russians had raped her and other sisters so often, immediately after taking the town, that she had out of shame laid aside her Sister's uniform.

From the first to the last day that I was in Liegnitz, although in the midst of houses which I knew, I felt like a stranger. One cannot describe the chaos, but can only say what one has experienced. Most of the houses were open, and anyone could go in. There was no-one dwelling in the whole of the southern part of the town, except one old man. There were no people in the streets. On many of the houses the Poles had put placards stating, that all the apartments had been requisitioned by the Poles. A short time later, we heard, that all this was continually changing. The apartments were in an indescribably devastated condition.

The Germans were outlaws in the eyes of the Poles, just as of the Russians. A few weeks after the armistice we succeeded in getting, with great trouble, a shattered and filthy room, in the middle of the town. Some of the lowest and most horrible streets in the middle of the town were allotted to us Germans. Some individual Germans lived in arpartments, which were in streets further outside, but this generally did not last long, for they had to reckon from hour to hour with being kicked and punched out, and also with losing their belongings. The authoress illustrates this by an example.

This state of chaos increased from week to week, and the Poles continued to get more and more obtrusive. They tried twice in July 1945 to expel the Germans suddenly from Silesia[447]); the doors of the houses were broken open, armed Poles and also a certain number of Russians broke into the apartments, and forced the occupants out, and put them on the street within five minutes. The latter were only able to take away with them, what they could collect in the very greatest haste. After a very short time the apartments were completely plundered and devastated, and presented a shocking sight. There was also no consideration shown to sick people. Many people bedded their sick in farm-carts, and moved to the west.

Unfortunately, it began to rain all over the land for about a week, and the highways were blocked with refugees, who had nothing to eat and drink except water. German money was not accepted. These unfortunale people crept for days along the highways, and most of them found no quarters for sleeping in.

Only the first wave of refugees succeeded in reaching West Germany, the rest of these Germans, which may be estimated at a quarter of the expellees, were chased back again by the Russians, on the ground that there were no instructions for them to be expelled. These poor people came back completely exhausted, famishing, in rags and tatters, and freezing, and somewhere or other they had to seek a hiding place. They secretly took from the empty houses everything, which was left over, and could be used. Then they contiuned to vegetate, for one could not call such a state life.

One was never safe. The Poles and the Russians continually tried to force their way into the houses, and removed forcibly everything, which the Germans still possessed. In summer and autumn 1945 the Germans were to some extent safe in the interior of the town, but in the following winter and in the spring of 1946 the situation became unbearable.

In the evening, during the night, and even in the day time, armed bands forced their way into the houses, beat the German occupants, raped the women, and plundered. No-one helped us, and there was no police. The Polish militia was notorius for its brutality, and did not hesitate to take away the rest of the belongings of the Germans on big trucks.

An acquaintance of mine from Glogau, who was the mother of 5 children, of whom some were grown-up, moved in the late autumn of 1945 from the country into the town of Liegnitz. One night a detachment of armed militia smashed open the door of the house, struck the 2 daughters and mother with their fists and the butts of their rifles in the face, and robbed all the clothes and victuals. The chairs and potatoes were loaded into the truck waiting before the house, and then the Poles drove away, and continued to plunder, until the truck was full.

At the beginning of 1946, the Germans living in the part of the town assigned to them were also not spared. Within 5 minutes we were driven out of our dwellings, Poles moved in, and we had to remain in the street, sitting on shabby bundles of underclothing. As there was no question yet of an official expulsion and we heard, that it was impossible to cross the frontier, we were all forced to creep closer together, until the town of Liegnitz was at last compulsorily evacuated on the 1. July 1946, by all Germans being suddenly called upon at 6 o'clock in the morning to leave their dwellings, within 10—20 minutes.

The conditions of life for every German were inconceivably hard. German money was not taken in payment, and those, who worked for the Russians or Poles, very rarely were paid in Polish money. One had to be satisfied with a water-soup or a piece of dry bread as wages.

Those, who were sick or very old and, therefore, could not work, had to barter their jewellery or linen for victuals, or slowly die of hunger. One witnessed the most shocking scenes.

No mercy was to be expected from the Russians or Poles. Those, who perished as a result of this misery, were wrapped up in a sheet or put into a sack, laid in a farm-cart, and buried in a mass grave. It will never be possible to give the numbers of the unfortunate people, who died of hunger and infectious diseases.

The situation of those, who were ill, was a particularly sad one. For not only were they not able to earn food for themselves and their children, but they also had not the necessary medicaments, or the money to purchase them. I myself was for some time in this predicament.

A special way of compelling the Germans to work consisted in picking men and women up in the streets, and compelling them to work for a day or several hours. It often happened, that Germans, on the way to their actual place of work, were, in spite of their identity card, brought away to compulsory work. The Poles often tore up the labour certificate of the Germans, and did with them what they liked. In most cases the Germans had to do such work without payment, and what was worse without receiving food.

We were not treated gently, but driven with pushes and blows to work. Later on, the Poles did not hesitate to shoot at us from behind, in the case of the smallest disobedience.

There were numerous cases of Germans who were picked up in the streets without any reason, and who had to remain for days in prison without food. Many were thrashed without knowing why.

At the beginning we often wondered, where all the Poles came from. Later on we heard, that the Russians had driven the Poles out of their homeland at very short notice, and had given as a reason, that they must go to Silesia, "where there were no people", and appropriate what belonged to the Germans.

The Poles acted accordingly, and generally appeared alone or accompanied by Polish militia. The Germans were forced to open cupboards, chests of drawers and such-like furniture, and then the Poles took what they wanted with the words: "All mine." If he took a fancy to the beds, the mattresses and other furniture, a day later a truck stopped before the house, and everything was put into it. The following example shows how the Poles appropriated the property of other people: In the spring of 1946 I was working in Gassendorf near Liegnitz for a Polish military unit, which was under the command of the Russians. The Poles had previously been stationed near to Sorau. As the Poles had no skilled workers, a German machinery fitter was compelled to work for a long time in Gassendorf. He told us, that every German there had to work for the Poles. Whilst the Germans were at their work, one house after the other was systematically burgled, a truck drove up, and everything the Poles wanted was taken away.

How did the Russians behave? During the first months, until about August 1945, they mostly tried to protect us against the Poles. If anything was stolen from us, and we could state what Pole was the thief, the Russians appeared, obviously with pleasure, and took the stolen things away from the Pole. It sounds strange, but the Russians generally liked the Germans more than the Poles.

We soon knew this, and we only needed to say to the Russians: "Russian good, Pole bad", and the face of the roughest Russian brightened up. I myself have conversed with many Russians, who had the greatest difficulty in moderating their rage against the Poles. I have myself seen several fights between Russians and Poles. The kinds of houses, in which they lived, showed that the Russians had the upper hand.

A short time after the armistice, the Poles requisitioned the whole southern block of the town of Liegnitz. A great number of the houses had Polish placards, on which it was stated, that the house with all in it belonged to the

Poles. The houses were all open, and every Russian and Pole had the right to go in, without let or hindrance. Many a German trembled with fear, when they entered. Every Pole took what he wanted and could carry away. After a few days all the houses were practically stripped, and were in a fearful state of devastation. The Russians tore the Polish placards down, and moved into some of the houses themselves. Some of the other houses, which were already occupied by Poles, had to be evacuated by them, and they were compelled to move to the quarter of the town behind the Katzbach, which is called Karthause.

Thus the ownership kept changing. For a time the town-mill, the railway station, the electricity and gasworks and all important establishments were in the hands of the Poles, then the Russians took over the administration, and such changes often continued. We Germans no longer understood this confusion.

Many Poles, who had worked in Germany during the war, and candidly admitted that they had been treated well, praised German exactitude, punctuality and conscientiousness. They also maintained quite openly, that Silesia would quickly prosper again, if under a German administration.

The Poles hated the Russians, and showed their amazement at their senseless destruction and unbridled immorality. While I was working for the Polish unit, I often had the opportunity of witnessing conversations, and on other occasions we spoke quite openly with the Poles about the political confusion.

Many Poles spoke with great contempt about the fact, that the Polish government consisted of 2 parties, the Communist and the National ones, which were bitterly fighting one another, and also about the fact, that the Russians decided everything, and that the Poles had practically no say in the matter.

That this last view was right, was visibly demonstrated to us by the fact, that the Polish military unit in Gassendorf was under the command of a Russian captain. The Russian sergeant from Lobendau was a great enemy of the Poles, and openly said, that the Russians were letting the Poles starve.

In one respect, and that was in drinking, the Russians and Poles got on very well together. No matter, how great the hostility was, when it was a question of bartering something for strong liquor, both were at once in agreement. This was no joke for us Germans, because a drunken Russian is capable of every crime. Then the Russian is not master of himself, and on the next day no longer knows, what he has done. I have seen with my own eyes, how two drunken Russians tried to rape in the most disgusting way our neighbour, who was 70 years of age, and held her grandchild in her arms, who was 2 years old. Some Poles arrived on the scene, and instead of helping the old woman clapped their hands in applause, and urged the Russians on.

The authoress now describes, how she was driven by hunger out of the town, and accepted the offer of the Russians to work on the military collective farm in Gassendorf.

We workers on the collective farm were mostly town people. The Poles had in July 1945 driven all the inhabitants out of Gassendorf, just as they had done in the neighbouring villages. It was not until August, that three quarters of the inhabitants returned. The farm houses were all open, and everyone fetched what he liked, in cases and baskets. Bedsteads, cupboards, tables, chests of drawers, feather-beds, plates and pots, in short everything which was moveable, had been fetched away, within a few days. Nothing was left but an awful state of devastation. The Russians left us free to go and take, what we needed, at that time the usual way of life in Silesia.

Russians and Poles helped themselves, and used up everything, which was at hand, but who did any renovating? Who built something new? Who supplied something for what had been destroyed? No-one had begun any kind of re-building up to May 1946. The Germans wanted to do so, but they were not allowed to. How can one describe the condition of this agricultural territory, which had been up to then rich and cultivated? Empty houses, open, without window-panes, overgrown with weeds and filthy, rats and mice in uncanny numbers, unharvested fields, land which had been fertile, now completely overgrown with weeds and lying fallow. Not in a single village did one see a cow, a horse or a pig, let alone small cattle or any pigeons. The Russians had taken everything away to the east, or used it up.

If fuel was required, then whole woods were generally felled, or window-frames and doors were torn out of the empty houses, broken up on the spot, and immediately used for making fire. The Russians and Poles even used the staircases and banisters as fire-wood. In the course of time, even the roofs of houses were removed, and used for heating. Both our summer houses on our plot of land, in the south of the town of Liegnitz, were also used up for fire-wood by the Russians, who occupied our house. The Russians obviously had no use for furniture as such, and the most beautiful dining-room furniture, book-cases, chests of drawers etc. were broken up, and put into the stove.

All this happened during the first months of the armistice, and during this time the chief work of destruction was done. The Russians systematically cleared out everything, that was for them of value, such as all sewing machines, pianos, grand-pianos, baths, water taps, electric plants, beds, mattresses, carpets, etc. They destroyed, what they could not take away with them. Trucks often stood for days in the rain, with the most valuable carpets and articles of furniture in them, until everything was completely spoiled and ruined.

The majority of the agricultural machines were foolishly destroyed in the autumn of 1945. Sowing machines, threshing machines lay around in the fields, exposed to all kinds of weather. By spring 1946 they could no longer be used. One is forced to ask one's self, why the Russians did not leave all these valuable articles for the Poles. We have often asked ourselves this question.

The authoress now gives a detailed description of the conditions of working and living on the collective farm, under the arbitrary domination of Russian commandants and supervisors.

By the end of August 1945 we only still possessed such clothing, as was absolutely indispensable. When tramping back, I had left 2 trunks and a full rucksack in Schweidnitz and Striegau. There was little hope of ever finding them again. It was out of the question to go by train, because in the first place I had no Polish money, and in the second place Germans were terribly treated on the railway. What should I do? The Russians gave me 2 days leave, but only for Liegnitz. We stood on the highway, and had luck. Russian trucks gave us lifts for shorter and longer distances. Without having my son with me, I should never have dared this, for every Russian demanded a reward. If we had not been in such very great need, I never should have left so much to chance.

And what did our beautiful Silesia now look like? The villages were empty and devastated. Emaciated Germans stood in front of plundered and smashed-up houses. No garden and no tree had been worked on. The Germans were literally starving to death on their former landed property.

Just before reaching Striegau, we took a rest. Germans told me, that everyone there had hunger typhus. Their food consisted of nothing but potatoes with salt. The parish nurse confirmed this. Also here the Poles had driven all the Germans suddenly out of their homes on the 8. July 1945, in all the villages and towns around, and had actually thrown them into the street. The Russians then forced all the Germans to go back. Everywhere the picture was the same.

There follows a detailed description of the rest of her time on the collective farm in Gassendorf. The authoress shows, by means of several examples, how the Russian supervisors, in addition to treating the Germans, as usual, as mere slave-workers, also subjected them on every possible occasion to chicanery, according to their arbitrary caprices, and how they tormented them to the danger of life and limb without any cause.

Autumn came, and it was everywhere rumoured, that the Russians would soon move away from Gassendorf. Not much had been done on the collective farm. The Russians had only harvested and threshed the products of the fields, which the Germans had sown in autumn 1944. The old farmers were amazed at the methods of harvesting.

Late August came, and what we considered impossible happened, that is to say, the fields were neither tilled nor was anything planted there. The straw, remaining from the threshing, was left in the fields, and rotted. Not a single barn was filled up with stores for the winter. The threshed grain was taken to the east, as the Russians frankly admitted to us. A part of it the Russian soldiers used to buy alcohol, or to get money for their own purposes. The food became worse, because both the Russian cooks had got rid of the stocks for alcohol and Polish money.

One day the Russians departed from Gassendorf, but the devastation, which they left behind, was inconceivable. They deliberately smashed everything up, and in the castle, in which they had lived, they did not leave a single window-pane whole. They emptied buckets of water onto the floors, so that, when the cold weather set in, there was ice in the rooms. The glazed tiles in the beautiful bath-rooms, the baths, doors, walls, and cupboards were destroyed. Everywhere there were heaps of filth, we Germans had to take all the barn doors off their hinges. Then the Russians drove over them with their heavy tractors, so that the doors were smashed up. The once so beautiful estate was desolate, broken up, and condemned to become a ruin.

I saw the same picture in the neighbouring villages, after the departure of the Russians.

Gradually the few Germans, who had remained behind, also departed, for everyone was afraid of being in the deserted place. Some moved into the neighbouring village of Lobendau, which had a Russian military unit of 800 men. Russian and Polish villages began to develop. The Russians tolerated no Poles in their area, and if they left a village to the Poles, they smashed up everything before going away.

Our village was left to the mercy, during the winter months, of the hordes passing through. I changed my dwelling, and looked for a room in a house, which was more central. It became more uncanny from day to day, and we were every hour molested by Russians and Poles. We barricaded the doors of our house with iron bars and trunks of trees, but this did not help. The Russians and Poles climbed through the windows, or broke the doors. The Russians came chiefly because of women, and the Poles to plunder.

Some of the inhabitants of the village had fled to the Russian village of Lobendau, and at the beginning of February 1946 only 8 families had remained behind. I was now living quite alone in the evacuated, battered house. Whither should I turn? Everywhere there was the same horror. We gradually got indifferent, and the awful distress made it immaterial to us, what dangers would come. When the Russians broke into our house, and this happened almost daily, in fact, often several times in succession, my young son went to bed, and pretended to be ill. That saved us in most cases, because the Russians have consideration for a sick child.

Several Russians explained to me, when I asked them, why they smashed up everything before departing, that they did it intentionally, and had pleasure in so doing.

The authoress reports on attempts of Russian soldiers to make women give in to them by cunning and force, and then continues:

Where could one lodge a complaint? Everywhere one was as a German chased away like a stray dog. I considered moving to Liegnitz, but it was not much better there, for the Poles behaved themselves shockingly. It was very unpleasant for me, when I experienced that in Liegnitz even the Polish children vented their hatred on us. It often happened to me, that children ran behind me, and tried to trip me up from behind. In such a case I was powerless to do anything, for if I had taken the very least action, I should have had serious consequences to face. I heard from acquaintances, that this not only happened to me, but that other Germans were molested by Polish children in the vilest way.

We Germans were outlaws, for everyone could fetch us for work, and torture and beat us without anyone troubling about it. We often heard, that people were found murdered, without the authorities doing anything. The corpses lay, where they were for days, without being buried. My little son saw a dead man in the neighbouring village lying on a bench, with the worms creeping over his body. Three murdered former German soldiers lay one morning, in front of the house of a woman I knew in Wildschutz.

The Russian headquarters in Lobendau, Pahlowitz, Johnsdorf, Rothkirch and other places were looking for workers. I, therefore, decided to report myself in Rothkirch for work. But the first day sufficed, in order to cause me to pack my bundle, and return with my son to Gassendorf. They did not fetch me back, because I could not milk, and further, young girls were preferred, which was the chief reason. There was no use for women with children in this harem life.

Sometime later we heard from people, who had run away to us, that those, who were not the mistresses of Russians, received the special punishment of having to do the hardest work, from early in the morning to late at night. Moreover, the women and girls, who remained decent, were tormented in every conceivable way. As a great number ran away, the Russians fetched fresh workers from the locality of Jauer.

Our locality was rendered particularly unsafe by a detachment of the Air Force, which was stationed between Liegnitz and Gassendorf. The Russians on many days often trained from early in the morning until the evening, and heavy bombs landed quite near to us, the fragments flying right into our village.

Gradually more and more Poles began to settle in our village. 8 Polish families took possession of the farms, which best suited them. Most of them were not married, but almost every one of them brought a girl friend with him, and both of them lived from the sparse stores of the Germans, or from anything else, which they had appropriated as their own property.

The Germans became more and more embittered, for the Russians had given us grain for the harvesting work, which we had done. Now the Poles had the right to live from the grain and the potatoes. If the Germans did not deliver enough, the Polish militia appeared, and gave their compatriots the greatest part of the stores. Generally, no other course remained open to the Germans than to leave their property, in order not to die of starvation.

Many Germans, who did not want to quit their homes, worked on their own farm for the Poles, who had moved in, and they received as wages food from their own stocks. As the Poles had no furniture or domestic utensils, the militia drove through with trucks, and collected all that we still had. The Polish soldiers went from house to house, roaring out at the top of their voices, if we did not open the door at once, and robbed literally the last bit of stuff left.

I know of three cases, in which Germans were shot down by Poles, because they did not want to hand over their property at once.

One must be surprised, that there was anything at all left to take away, but we Germans took all the usable furniture and other things, which the Russians had thrown away, and repaired them. The Germans were diligent and clever in this. But scarcely had one again established one's self on a modest basis, when the Poles or Russians passing through took everything away again. He was best off, who lived within his four bare walls, without bed and clothing, and who did not again try to do any rebuilding.

At the beginning of March 1946, a Polish military unit of about 70 men arrived in Gassendorf. All the Poles wore German uniforms, and their captain was a Russian. A few fields around the farm were tilled and planted, the rest of the land was left uncultivated. Altogether only 4 German families were still in the village, the others had fled. These few remaining people were immediately compelled to work for the Poles. We women worked as servant girls, and had to put up with the dirtiest jokes on the part of the Polish soldiers, and were pushed and pinched in every conceivable part of our bodies. Further, we peeled the potatoes, cleaned out the stables and stalls, and swept the yard.

When we were sweeping the yard and the weather was fine, the Polish corporal had an arm chair placed for him in the middle of the yard, and from this comfortable seat issued his orders to us.

The fashion increased among the Poles of running around with a riding whip or small stick. The Poles often used the stick, as I experienced on my own body. When I was fetched to work one morning, and did not come at once, as I had not yet prepared the breakfast soup for my little son and myself, I was well whipped with a stick in front of my little son. The whole way to work, the furious Pole struck me with his clenched fist on my head and in my face. There were officers walking before and behind us, but not one of them seemed to see.

As the Poles required workers, a squad of Polish soldiers was sent early every morning to go from house to house in the neighbouring villages, and to drive the Germans out. As the Poles did not give us a piece of bread, in spite of our hard work, and we only received two very sparse meals a day, the other inhabitants of the village refused to work. Also the Russians searched all houses every morning for workers. The villagers suffered themselves to be taken to work by the Russians, and the Poles had the disadvantage. They protested, became furious, fetched every German, whom they met in the fields, or on the highway, and pushed and beat anyone, who did not at once go with them. There were cases, in which they even shot at women from the back. Poles and Russians often quarrelled with one another about their share of the workers. Finally, the Poles had to yield, and the Russians did what they liked.

The first Easter Day was approaching. We received the order to be at 6 o'clock in the morning in the kitchen for work. As the cook was in a very good mood, because he had been drinking, he invited us, to our surprise, to a very good breakfast: Eggs, sausage and fancy cakes, which we had not eaten for a year. In order to give our relatives a treat for Easter, we put the delicacies which had been given us away, and ourselves ate dry bread. Whilst we were working the cook searched our bags and took everything away again. For the first time for a year, I cried bitterly, because I could not bring my little son the Easter present I had promised, and because we Germans were so defenseless.

A few days after Easter the Polish military unit moved to Wildschutz, near Liegnitz. Our lot became continually worse. An elderly woman literally died of hunger in her bed. The same fate menaced us, if we did not act. We heard nothing about the fact, that we Germans were to be expelled. All kinds of rumours circulated. People were continually reporting, that Silesia was to remain German, and that the Poles must leave the land, and that the frontiers were to be fixed, as they had been in 1937. We could not, however, form any opinion about these reports, as we were neither able to hear the wireless nor to read a paper.

Even many Poles did not believe, that the land was to belong to them forever, they also were longing to be home, and wanted to return to the country, from which the Russians had driven them. Therefore, it is evident, that neither the Russians nor the Poles were interested, in rebuilding Silesia.

Some Poles told us, that they let the sowing machines run empty and preferred to sell the grain, in order to buy brandy. The cow, which had been promised by the Russians, had not been received by the Poles in our village, when I emigrated in May 1946, and even if the cows had arrived, they would have had to die of hunger, as there was practically no hay at all available. All the barns were empty.

There was nothing more to keep us in our home. Many people tried to cross the Neisse, in order to be able to get further to the west. My decision was final: I wanted to get out. Therefore, when the time was suitable, I gradually hid my baggage in the neighbouring wood and disappeared.

We mostly walked along the Autobahn, because everyone advised us not to use the highway, which was unsafe. Everywhere the picture was the same: untilled arable land, devastation and indescribable misery. Our beautiful Silesia had in the short period of a single year become a desert.

The authoress now explains why, in view of the circumstances, she had not set out before, and illustrates by examples, how dangerous such an enterprise was, and that many a one in the course of doing it, had been robbed of his last goods, and even been murdered.

No. 232

Report of the teacher K. K. of Grottkau
in Upper Silesia
Original. 31. July 1952.

Conditions in the internment and forced labour camp at Grottkau from July 1945 to May 1946

In the early hours of the 18. July 1945 the Germans still living in Grottkau were ordered by armed Polish soldiers to leave their houses, within 30 minutes, and after being plundered were driven into the Provincial Education Establishment. For the first 3 days no-one troubled about food or quarters for these 1250 persons. Then the German manager of a farm delivered potatoes, and the Polish camp administration, 250 grammes of bread daily for each person. The camp was divided up into 4 blocks, and these were put under German block managers, whose chief duty was to see, that the necessary number of workers were supplied to the Poles.

Every morning at 5 o'clock in summer and 6 o'clock in winter, the camp bell was rung to wake the people up. The block managers ran through their blocks, and called out in a loud voice. Every person, who was not ill, hastened to take a sparse breakfast, and then to line up on the road before the gate. Then a representative from the Polish Labour Bureau appeared, and chose the necessary workers.

The special squads left the camp first. These were gas, waterworks and forest workers, workers in the different kitchens of different Polish administrative bodies, such as Town and District Militia, Municipal Kitchen and Kitchen of the Polish Secret Police. Higher placed Poles demanded Germans, mostly women for doing housework. All these left the camp early, and went to their work.

Then the chief body of workers followed, about 350—400 persons, who were brought in close formation to the town. First of all, Polish supervisors went with truncheons through the camp rooms, and chased all persons to work, whom they assumed to be capable of working.

Thus every morning a great crowd left the camp, and were jeered at on the way by Poles. It not uncommonly happened, that Poles stood at the windows, and showed their joy at the miserable column. This column had for the most part to do the hard work of sweeping the streets. The women had to make brooms out of twigs to do this sweeping. Afterwards they had to remove the filth from the streets. There were always 15—20 women, who dragged a large cart, which they had loaded with the refuse, from the town. Then they unloaded it outside the town.

The moving of furniture was a very important matter. When a new Pole came, he took 4—6 German men, and went with them into the abandoned dwellings. Here he chose everything, which he thought he could use. The German men had to carry the furniture he had chosen into his apartment. Not even Polish doctors and clergymen hesitated to commit this kind of theft. The remaining furniture was brought into the upper rooms of the Town Hall, or to the Neugebau premises. From here it was distributed to Poles.

Often the women had to remove earthworks, and they had to do this, whether they knew how to work with a pick-axe and shovel or not. On the big square in front of the Town Hall lawns were laid out with stones, and were mostly looked after by German children between 12 and 14 years of age. Rye, wheat and barley were threshed by machine in the barns near the slaughtering house. Every labour commando was in charge of a Pole, who acted as supervisor. These were mostly rough men who delighted in tormenting Germans, in every possible way.

In December 1945 the saw-mill was detached from the gas and waterworks, and made independent. It was our task to get the saw-mill in the Neisser Street running, and we succeeded in doing so, except that it remained a little defective. The saw frame was ultimately able to be used again for sawing. The logs required were fetched from the town forest.

There were at the most 28 persons employed in the saw-mill. The chief supervisor, a Pole, was a quite pleasant man, whom one could trust, he also understood our distress. He was succeeded in February 1945 by another Pole, who had spent 20 years in Czechoslovakia. His chief employment was that of registrar for births, deaths and marriages in the town of Grottkau. He was a very violently tempered man. He had two Poles to assist him, one for day-shifts and the other for night-shifts. In his hatred of the Germans he committed acts of violence, and struck me in the face with his clenched fist, or with articles of furniture.

In the office I drew up tables for him, for calculation of wood. The more tables I drew up for him, the more he hated me, as being a representative of the German intelligentsia. His sole aim and object were to get me into a Polish prison. It was not possible for him to do this, in the usual way, as I had not been a member of the Party. Members of the Party were always brought into the former prison, without any hesitation.

An outsider would say, that it was totally impossible to do this work, on the very small rations received. It is, however, a fact, that the Poles only gave us some potato soup and one piece of bread daily. At the beginning this piece of bread weighed 250 grammes. Later on 180 down to 120 grammes. Also at the beginning there was a little hot coffee in the mornings. That was the only food we received during 24 hours.

The consequences of this inadequate and non-varying diet very quickly followed. They were of various kinds and very serious. Many women got swollen legs. There was also hunger typhus, which caused great numbers of deaths.

In the months of September and October 1945, old potatoes were delivered for making soup, they were got out of the pits in the neighbouring villages. The owners of these pits had mostly not returned by spring, so that it must be assumed, that the eating of these potatoes hastened the occurrence of typhus, or anyway made the course of the disease worse.

When an old horse was slaughtered, the Germans often were given inferior pieces of it. Before Schleffer's brewery a horse was slaughtered publicly in the street, and pieces of it remained lying around. Germans came after some days to get these pieces, but Russians who were passing by drove them away, saying that the meat would be dangerous to eat. This occurrence, therefore, appealed even to the Russians. There were only a few children up to 3 years of age, who survived and came out of the camp. Up to one year there was not a single one.

In the autumn months of 1945 2—4 people died daily. More than 50 % of these dead were buried without a coffin. They were simply wrapped up in a sheet or sometimes only in paper, and then put on a small hand-cart, and taken to the cemetery. The Polish commandant of the camp put every difficulty in the way of accompanying the corpses to burial. Thus it was very rare, that more than 2—4 persons went as mourners. One often saw the grave-digger with his assistant dragging the cart, which was not accompanied by anyone. The maximum number of such burials on one day was seven. By far the overwhelming majority of the dead were brought to their last resting place in the Catholic cemetery. During the first months the graves were occasionally consecrated by a priest, but later on never at all. Over 500 mounds in the Catholic cemetery testify to the intentional mass murdering of Germans.

These victims were not only old people. It is a strange fact, that many girls between 16—30 years of age were attacked by diseases. One day they were in the bloom of health, and in 14 days corpses. The Poles laughed, when they saw the great numbers of corpses. The Polish mayor is alleged to have said, that it would be good if 30 Germans died every day.

This statement corresponded to the medical attention, which he had accorded to the camp. For this attention amounted to nothing. The way was paved for typhus and skin diseases, and no-one thought of isolation or any such measures. As there was very little possibility of washing, a plague of head lice increased in a shocking degree. There were cases of people dying, as a result of the plague of lice. Some people sick with typhus received permission to go to the hospital in Münsterberg, but they were not allowed to be driven with a horsed vehicle, and had to be brought there on a handcart. Finally the hospital mentioned refused to take them in, as the financial side of the question had not been clarified. The distance to Münsterberg was 30 kilometres.

There were on two occasions inocculations against typhus, and on one occasion an examination by a doctor. This polish doctor sounded the patient, with his clothes on and buttoned up, so that the examination was, in fact, a farce. In August the parishioners of Petersheide and Schönheide were brought into the camp. A Red Cross sister, Maria P. came with them from Schönheide. As the danger of infection increased, and the Poles were extremely afraid of this, a building in the extreme north-west of the camp was made into a hospital. In the normal sense of the word, it would be impossible to refer to this as a hospital. It could at the very best only be called an isolation station. Sister Maria had to get beds and straw on her own initiative, so that the patients could lie down. The sanitary arrangements were a violation of the notion of cleanliness. Closets and watermains could not be used. Although there were German men enough, occupied, as we have already mentioned, in the gas and waterworks, nothing was done to put an end to these filthy conditions. Here also the food consisted merely of potato soup and the modest ration of bread.

Sick Germans were also brought from the neighbouring villages to the isolation station. They had been promised, that they would receive good food and good attention in the hospital of the camp. No Polish doctor ever entered the station. The unselfish devotion of Sister Maria brought her an infection. She got typhus, and had to remain in bed for ten weeks. Scarcely was she convalescent, when in addition to nursing the sick patients, she also undertook to look after 16 orphans, who were all suffering from the horrible skin disease known as scabies. Sister Maria exercised all her influence with the Germans of the neighbouring villages, in order to get additional food for her patients.

There was also the treatment of the out-patients in the camp, who were not so seriously ill. The food situation, however, got continually worse, so that Sister Maria reported to the Polish mayor, that she must refuse all responsibility for the children, if she did not receive permission to go with them to the *Reich*. Up to then, this permission had been refused, but now she received it. She departed at the end of May 1946 with the 16 children, and succeeded in bringing them to their relatives, or in getting them taken in by orphanages.

Another consequence of the wretched feeding was, that the notion of personal property and of other morality sank. Every occupant of the camp tried to get Polish money and sought some articles, either clothing or something else, which he could sell to a Pole in the town. If he did not possess such things or no longer had them, then he stole them from his comrades. Even the switches for the electric light disappeared.

The Polish dealers bought everything, and everything was to be had for money. A loaf in the shops cost first of all 19 zlotys and later on 30 zlotys, but only weighed 4 lbs. For sugar one had to pay 240 zlotys, for lard 500, for meat 100—200, for butter 480 zlotys, in each case for 2 lbs. The value of the zloty kept sinking. At the beginning one had to pay 100 Reichsmarks for 30 zlotys, but already in April and May 1946 one got 100—110 zlotys for 100 Reichsmarks. In autumn 1945 the Poles definitely refused to accept the Reichsmark in payment. From November one could buy the Polish zloty in every shop. One was even asked in the streets, if one had Reichsmarks to sell.

In comparsion with the Germans, the Poles were well off in regard to victuals. They often looked for German women in the camp to do their housework for them. In most cases the German women had to show their favours to Polish men, in order not to lose their jobs, and to obtain some food for their relatives in the camp. Can one throw a stone at these women, if they yielded to the temptation, in order to bring their children and husbands in the camp something to eat in the evening. It is interesting, however, to note that there were also females, who did not only do this out of dire need. These cases were, however, only in the minority.

Here we must mention the Germans, who yielded to the Polish demand to become Polish citizens. The Poles tried by all kinds of promises to get us to decide for Poland. We were told, we could then immediately move into the town, could take off our white armbands, and that we would get better food, etc.

A number, especially of those speaking both languages, were taken in by these promises. They received certain advantages, but not in the degree they had expected. Many owned property in the town, and hoped to get it back again, or at least to be able to reoccupy the premises, but both were refused.

The gaps as a result of the mortality made themselves felt, and had to be filled up. Therefore, without any reason at all, or on false pretences, villagers from the district of Grottkau were driven into the camp. The parishes affected were Lindenau, Lobenau, Kleinmahlendorf, Hennerdorf, Breitenfeld and finally, Hochdorf, near Ottmachau. The maximum number of prisoners was 1 856.

It was, therefore, inevitable, that 70 persons had to be quartered in a single classroom. The people were forced to lie so close together in the night, that no-one could move without disturbing the one lying next to him. Men, women and children were in one and the same room. These conditions were insupportable, both hygienically and morally. Every small room was so crowded, that one could scarcely move. Most of the windows had been broken as a result of the war, and had been filled up with boards and straw. There were, however, always crevices enough for the cold air in the winter of 1945—1946 to get in.

The auther now reports on the contents and signifiance of rumours, which continually gave rise to fresh hope among the internees. Such hopes *particularly referred to dates, when the camp would soon be closed, to the end of the Polish administration, and to an intervention on the part of the Western Powers. Likewise, everywhere in Silesia there was great hope, that assistance would come, particularly from the British.*

There was no cultural life in the camp. In the first place, we were not allowed to receive news. We could not write, and received no mail at all. It was not until the 1. April 1946, that we were told we could receive mail from the *Reich,* and cold write there. However, very little mail arrived, and what did arrive was by no means encouraging.

In the camp itself we had been deprived of every kind of cultural activity. The priests of both denominations were prohibited to speak German in their ministrations. The result was, that the Catholic priest had to say the Lord's Prayer in Latin. The town clergyman had been continually trying to offer up Mass in the camp, and he received permission. He told some historical incidents and connected them with Christian words of love. In this way it was possible for him to utter some words of ministration to the members of his congregation.

It was forbidden to read German books, and Poles often went through the camp to collect these books, and take them away. The Germans had obtained such books from ruined and deserted dwellings. The following happened to me: I had found a book, which I thought was very interesting, and I laid it on the table in the office of the saw-mills. A Polish civilian from the town happened to come into the office and saw the book, which he immediately took with him, and reported to the mayor. As a punishment I was to be locked up for 2 nights in the cellar. This punishment would have been carried out, if the Polish supervisors had not had a good opinion of me. I was charged with trying to do German propaganda work.

The German children of an age to go to school were not allowed to do so. Polish children went to school in the town, but our children were given no instruction at all. During the first weeks in the camp, a German, who spoke the Polish language, had to give the children lessons in Polish, but after a short time this was also stopped. During the whole week, no German song was heard in the camp, and no cultural meeting was allowed to be held. We gradually became so obtuse and indifferent, that we no longer had any desire for cultural activity of any kind. There were a number of persons in the camp, who would have been able to lessen the daily cares of the occupants, by cultural activity. But who would be willing to be prevented from doing so, by the Polish truncheon? Although there was a sports ground, belonging to the institution, no-one went there. And when Polish sports clubs were playing there, very few Germans went as spectators. It was our lot to lead a fatiguing, hungry life, without any kind of pleasure.

The author now reports on the endeavours of certain courageous persons to make the life of the internees easier, and on the work of different priests, who ministered to the occupants of the camp.

As early as the end of autumn 1945, we were told both by Germans and Poles, that we must all leave Silesia. As we had no idea of what had been decided at Potsdam, and as we received no news of any kind, we could not and would not believe this, and also not that Silesia would be handed over to the Poles. Sometimes such rumours were no longer heard, and sometimes they were again spread. Even when the Polish governor in Grottkau announced, that there would not be a single German in Silesia by summer 1946, we simply did not believe him, because we were well acquainted with Polish boasting.

At the end of April, however, and the beginning of May, there began to be more news from all sides, and people breathed more freely in the camp. One evening, when we had only just returned from work, we suddenly had to return to the saw-mills. There we had to load wagons full of boards to be taken away, and we were at this work almost the whole night. What was going to be done with these boards, was kept absolutely secret from us. They were brought to the yard of the old tax-office in Junkern Street, and the same night a high fence of boards was erected there, so that it was only possible to go into the yard on the Junkern Street side.

On the 13. May 1946 the leaders of the blocks announced, that the occupants of the camp were going to be sent away the next morning, and that everyone was to make the necessary preparations. Only skilled workmen were to be kept back; there was a great rejoicing.

On the 14. May came release for about 800 Germans, and everyone packed their last goods and chattels. The Polish mayor appeared, as he was so often accustomed to do, with his administrative officials and the militia. All of us paraded on the paths of the camp, and the Poles came and selected craftsmen and other persons, who had to remain behind.

Then the departure commenced, which was a mixed picture of misery and rejoicing. Those, from whom the Poles had not already taken away their hand-carts, loaded them with beds and other belongings. People took leave, waved their hands to one another, and rejoiced. Those, who had to remain behind, tried to get away by tricks, and many succeeded, until this was noticed at the gates. I myself was kept back at the gate, by being struck with the butts of the rifles, it being alleged that I was a skilled worker. I saw a woman, who had to remain behind, faint, when she saw the column pass her window.

Outwardly the departure from was the same as the entry into the camp, but the people were inwardly in high spirits, when they departed. Farmers, who had large possessions in their villages, rejoiced loudly, as they left the camp with their sticks in their hands. Businessmen, workers, officials, teachers, old and young pushed through the gate, in fear of being kept back. Poles repeatedly pushed different people back, and called upon them to remain. The Poles had not thought, that the Germans, who loved their home so deeply and so clung to their property, would depart so full of joy. And thus every individual German unconsciously gave evidence of how cruelly and disgracefully we had been treated. Everyone was happy to depart, and did not try to escape from being sent away. This fact ought to have put the Poles to shame, and deserves to be recorded. All waited with the greatest patience several days in the tax-office building, until they heard the redeeming whistle of the locomotive, which was to bring the 60 wagons of the train out of this hell of suffering, misery and pain, to Germans on the other side of the Lusation Neisse.

In conclusion the author tries to characterize the conduct of the Poles towards the interned Germans[448]*).*

No. 264

Eyewitness report of E. L. of Posen.
Attested copy. 17. April 1951.

The lot of a German woman in Posen after the Russians marched in

The authoress describes first the entry of the Russians into the town.

The Poles now began to storm the apartments and to take everything out, such as eatables and trunks, and quartered themselves in the dwellings, which they liked. We also went back to our apartment, although the artillery fire continued. As we went up the stairs, the house was again hit by a shell which exploded near to us.

The Polish caretaker of the house came with some Russians, and ordered my mother and myself to prepare a dwelling in the house across the courtyard, as some Russians wanted to sleep there. Standing up to our knees in papers and pieces of broken glass, we had to clear up as quickly as we could without utensils for doing so. Our hands bled, and as things did not go quickly enough a Russian stood near us with a whip.

There appeared alternatively in the apartment armed Polish militia (every youth from 15 to 16 years of age had a weapon), which functioned as police, and Russians. They continually searched the rooms and cupboards, and took away with them everything which was worth anything. First of all we were called upon not to leave the apartments. The longer the defense of Posen continued, the worse we were tormented.

On the 8. February I was fetched, and had to go to the battlefields before the town (Elsenmühle), in order to collect the dead. They had been lying there for days, so that the uniforms were wet through, and the bodies heavy. Four women at a time had to take a dead man, and throw him into the nearest anti-tank ditch. Our gloves had been taken away from us, and they shouted at us: "Get hold of them with your fine little fingers."

The bodies were rolled without the identity discs being taken off, into the ditches which were 4 metres deep. Anyone, who has seen a battlefield, will realize how spiritually shattered we were at the look of the dead. I had seen dead people peacefully slumber in their coffins, but this was something quite different. The shoes and stockings of the dead men had been taken off, and these dead men had been mutilated or torn to pieces, according to the way, in which the bullet or shell had struck them.

There were also quite young men among them. We women had arranged amongst ourselves to note the names, by means of the paybooks which were lying about, in order to perhaps be able to give information to their relatives. It was, however, severely prohibited to pick up papers, and just as I had got a paybook into my hands, they were struck with a blow from a rifle-butt.

We also had to drag away the carcasses of horses. Ropes were put around them, and we had to put these heavy carcasses into adjacent shell craters. The carcasses were often in bits, as pieces had been cut out for eating. This was a very hard and painful work in the cold, the wet, and the dirt. We continually suffered insults, and were urged on to work more quickly. No-one asked if we were hungry.

We also had to collect ammunition, anti-panzer bombs, to make the highway clear, to remove guns which were standing about, and also to push trunks of trees aside. We did about 30 kilometres a day, shivering with cold, weakness and hunger. After our work we were brought, when it was beginning to get dark, into the house of the militia in Eichendorff Street, and were there shut up in rooms without windows. We were packed so closely together, that it was not even possible to lie on the floor. We cowered close together, as we were, freezing, and anyone who had a mantel put it also round his neighbour.

During this night we had a further horrible experience. The militia men were drunk, and guards were standing before our doors; we were called out one after the other during the night. We could put no questions to anyone, who returned, because we did not know, if there was a spy amongst us. It was now my turn, after someone had whispered to me: "They have taken my pocket-knife and watch away from me, and my ear-rings were torn out."

I was taken into a corridor, where the so-called commandant of the militia was sitting at a table, and called upon me to hand over my jewelery. When I replied that I had no more, as the Russians had taken it away from me, I was felt all over. They were angry at getting nothing from me, and finally kept my woollen shawl. One could see gold and silver, and watches under a similar shawl, which was lying on the table. The whole proceedings, therefore, amounted to nothing else but stealing everything from us. I was led away again.

Through the corridors there resounded disorderly noise, the singing of drunken men, and the rolling of drums; they were evidently celebrating something. All were drunk, and some were hitting out about them. This was the way, in which we passed this night; I kept continually thinking of my mother, who did not know, where I was or whether I would return.

We now had to report ourselves daily in the house of the militia, with a worker's identity card, and were detailed to our work. On the 9. February I had a free day, but on that day they turned things upside down in our house, and the rooms were continually searched. If the doors were not opened quickly enough for them, they simply shot through the keyholes.

A Pole appeared in our apartment who alleged, that he had lived there before, and billetted himself quite comfortably there. An aunt and a cousin of ours, whom we had in the meantime taken in, moved into the bedroom. Another room was requisitioned by a Polish woman, who was visited day and night by Russians. They ate from our stocks, and robbed us all round.

When we were lying in bed at night, we kept hearing steps coming up the stairs; these were always Russians, who were sent by the Poles into the dwellings of the Germans. They beat on the door with their rifle-butts, until it was opened. Without any consideration for my mother and aunt, who had to get out of bed, we were raped by the Russians, who always held a machine pistol in one hand. They lay in bed with their dirty boots on, until the next lot came. As there was no light, everything was done by pocket torches, and we did not even know, what the beasts looked like. During the day we had to work hard, and at night the Russians left us no peace. A certain number of regular guests had settled down in our house; they appeared in the evening, brought strong liquor and food with them, large pieces of meat in pillow-cases, cigarettes, tins of cheese, sardines, etc. Our dining-room was 7 metres long, and just the right place for the carousals, which the Russians held there. The barrel of sauerkraut was emptied, large dishes came onto the table, water glasses were used for strong liquor, and bread was brought in. Poles were also fetched in, and even my mother and old aunt had to be present, and eat and drink with them. The Russians ate the pork raw, and we had to eat with them. We did not dare to refuse.

They discovered my gramophone, and played the records indiscriminately, and made the most horrible noise throughout the night. The next day we had to work hard, but the Russians lay down, and did not go away until morning.

We Germans had nothing to say, but were always well-treated by this company. When they were drunk, they even took the old ladies in their arms and kissed them. We often waited for them, because they brought food with them, which we would otherwise not have received, as the stocks in the house were continually decreasing. The meeting was anyway a disorderly mix-up.

I will now proceed to describe the course of our work: we had to report ourselves daily to the militia, which detailed us for work. I was occupied as charwoman in the house of the militia, which in German times had been the seat of the Hotel and Catering Association. I myself had for some time been with the former manager of this enterprise. The house was now in a state of utter filth, because there was running up and downstairs the whole day. The administrator was the former chauffeur of the former manager of the Hotel and Catering Association, and he knew me well. But he could not let this be noticed, or he would have run the risk of being himself punished on the ground, that he was a pro-German. He occasionally took me to his apartment and gave me food, but he could only do this secretly.

The canalisation in the town was not in order, as a result of the war damage, and the toilets were stopped up and filthy. This filth we had to clear away with our hands, without any utensils to do so. The excrement was brought into the yard, shovelled into carts, which we had to bring to refuse tips. The awful part was, that we got dirtied by the excrement which spurted up, but we could not clean ourselves.

One day they chalked swastikas on the backs of a squad of people, who had to go to work, and then led them through the town; they were, of course, jeered at by the Poles, and words were shouted out, such as: "Those are the eaters of eggs and poultry", they were also spat at and beaten.

These people were brought back in the evening to the militia, and had to come again on parade. The command "Heil Hitler" was given, and they had to answer in chorus "We thank our leader." When we mentioned, that we had never been members of the Party, or that we would have long since been out of the way, we were shouted at: "You are Germans." The Air Force continued to shoot at the citadel for weeks. When there was a pause, squads had to go to the citadel and remove the piles of dead, which consisted of soldiers and civilians all mixed up together.

Meanwhile the militia had moved to another larger house, which we had to put in order. All the devastation in the house had to be repaired at a mad speed. We were guarded by Poles, with whom the Russians mixed themselves up, looking for German women, who were dragged into any kind of room, and even the larder, in order to be raped. One could hardly any longer call it raping, for the women were passive instruments, for one could not protect one's self or refuse, and one, therefore, suffered it.

Now my mother also had to report for work. We received the control card, which was stamped and signed every day.

My mother, 72 years of age, had to work outside the town on refuse heaps. There the old people were hunted about, and had to sort out bottles and iron, even when it was raining or snowing. The work was dirty, and it was impossible for them to change their clothes. When my mother once made a pause and sat down, because she was bleeding at the nose, a militia man at once rushed up and shouted at her, asking when she thought of continuing her work.

Here is something very interesting: a woman, who understood Russian, once heard some passing Russians say the following: "It is a disgrace, that such old people have to work for the Poles."

One day I was detailed with my cousin to clear up a hut, in which a bomb had exploded, and we had about 15 other women with us. We sorted out shoes and utensils, and carried the loads from one place to another, I would here mention, that we received no food and ate cold potatoes, which we had begged, but that we could only do secretly, as we could give the others nothing, as they only dragged themselves slowly forward. The guards were generally drunk, and beat weak people, until they worked again.

In front of the hut there were coffins with German dead, resting against the wall of a church. These coffins were tipped over, the dead thrown out, and the coffins taken away. After the corpses had been there for days, we had to throw them into holes, which we had dug. One could not call this a burial, for today no one any longer knows, that people are lying there under the ground, for no mounds were made.

Dead lay scattered about in the streets and at the corners, and were then put under the ground in front gardens. These were mostly people, who had collapsed and died of hunger.

We had now been able to remain for about 4 weeks in our apartment. But now there came a change, for one day there appeared an official from the Housing Office, who with shouts and threats demanded of us to leave the dwelling within 10 minutes at the most. We were shouted at and hunted about. My mother was lying in bed, but had to get up and dress herself. I was allowed to put my ski slacks and a pullover on. A knitted jacket they tore from my back, and even the old gloves were taken away from my mother. We were allowed to take with us a rug, a spoon and a dish. A small suitcase containing the most necessary articles, which I had packed, was torn out of my hands. As I did not want to take off my jacket, because it was winter, I was thrown on the floor in the vestibule before the eyes of my mother, and was kicked and punched, also in the face. Other Poles stood by and watched. My mother stood crying at the door, and I stumbled after her. We were hunted down the stairs, and along with other Germans, locked up in a coal cellar at the back of the house, from which the coal had just been taken away.

This was a room of about 4×4 metres, and 10 Germans were locked up in it. There was nothing in it, but 3 broken chairs. We were locked up, and passed a terrible night, expecting that we would be shot the next day. But we were indifferent to that, after all that we had gone through. One could not properly relieve one's self, and the next morning we were standing in the midst of human excrement and urine, which we had to sweep away with a broom.

Next morning a Polish woman secretly brought soup and bread from the house, because her old father, who was over 70 years of age, was a German and was amongst us. A poster was put on the door of the cellar, to the effect that it was forbidden to speak German, even in the cellar. On the next day the men improvised a shaky table with the help of wire. I used paper, so as to make something for my mother to lie on. We then lay in rags for weeks on the ground.

It must be further added, that we had neither towel, toothbrush nor soap, and this was all in the cold months of February and March. With ingenuity we contrived to make a very small stove, in order to have a little warmth. Everything was terribly dirty and very dark, as the cellar was situated deep under the ground. The windows were smashed, and carts had been placed in front of them, in order to keep the cellar dark. There was a mother sick with T. B. among us with her daughter, and they coughed incessantly. During the day we had to go out to work, and return in the evening to this hole. There we had to sit in the dark, or by the light of a stump of a tallow candle we had found.

At night Poles and Russians came into this dungeon allegedly to check, but in reality to find alcohol and women. I myself crept behind my mother amidst the rags, until they had gone away, but this was not always possible. Young Poles made fun of us, threw bricks through the windows, paperbags with sand, and the skins of hares filled with excrement. We did not dare to move or offer resistance, but huddled together in the farthest corner, in order not be be hit, which could not always be avoided. When we went across the yard to work, water was poured over us, and we were never free from torments.

I continually ran about with cooking utensils, and begged for food, also from Poles. Owing to my knowledge of the Polish language, I had contacted militia men, who let me from the cellar into the kitchen of the militia, as some of them were sorry for me. If I heard in my neighbourhood the expression "pretty woman", I reacted accordingly, if only to secure the smallest advantages. Occasionally a sentry gave someone his own loaves, also tobacco and cigarettes.

Things were bad for those, who spoke no Polish, for only Polish was spoken, in urging the people on to work. Anyone, who did not immediately understand, was beaten. I spoke Polish enough to help myself. But the Warsaw dialect made it more difficult to understand, anyway we learned the words we did not know, by having our ears boxed and being beaten.

As our hunger continually got worse, my mother decided to go secretly to Maria our previous servant girl, who was a Pole, and had worked for us for several years. She cried along with my mother out of pity, but must herself keep the visit secret, in order not to be regarded as pro-German, for anyone who was pro-German was most severely punished. This Polish girl, who had previously been treated very well by us, occasionally gave my mother bread. She had nothing else, as she herself was poor.

I begged and collected food everywhere, and was happy to be able to bring my mother something in the evening. This was warmed up on our little iron stove, and tasted good, whatever it happened to be. If I had any food left over, I went secretly into other cellars, and gave it to the Germans there. Everything was put into one pot, and all that had been brought from work was boiled up together.

In one of these cellars, there was an old clergyman, 70 years of age, whose wife had died as a result of the hardships. He had buried her himself somewhere or other. The cellar was a narrow hole, in which there were about 8 people, and the clergyman held us a service in the evening. All sat close together, without troubling about the vermin, which crept from one to the other. For all continued to hope, in the expectation of help. The people sang, but nothing unpleasant happened with the Poles because of this.

The cellar in the Eichendorff Street, which was previously called the Emperor Frederick Street, was obliquely opposite to the former St. Luke's Church, which was still standing, and we were always able to watch the Poles going to church. The German churches, which had not been destroyed, were quickly converted into Polish ones.

In this regard I would mention, that we could not understand, how the Poles went to church in our clothes. My mother and I met Polish women, who were wearing our furs shoes, and had our handbags with them; they were going to their Thanks Giving Service. We watched many of them, but we could say nothing, and were only amazed. The Pole is considered to be a good Catholic, but we could not grasp the fact, that they were able on the one hand to steal, and on the other hand to render thanks.

In the house of the militia there was a large room, where all of us, old and young, had to parade every day, in order to be detailed to work. Here also everything was filthy, and there was an absolute stink of dirtiness and disease. There sat and grovelled on the ground creatures, who were sick and uncared for. It would have been impossible to call them human beings; among these were children 10 or 12 years old, who also had to go to work. Particularly the boys were beaten, because they were regarded as having belonged to the Hitler Youth. The old people looked still older, because, like my mother, they had taken their false teeth out for fear, that they might be robbed of them. The Poles did not even hesitate to steal spectacles, because the frames were of gold. Many old people groped about, as if they were blind. Russians and Poles came into this house, and chose such people as washer-women and char-women, also others for doing transport work.

We washer-women, who worked for the Russians, always received food, even before the work. The washing was lousy, and we had to look for, and remove the lice. When the washing was dry, the rest of the lice ran about on it. This was a hard work, but we also had the opportunity of washing ourselves. We shared washing powder and such-like things which remained over, and were happy if we got a small piece of soap.

One day, when we were waiting for work, the door was suddenly opened, and about 10 very old men came in under Russian escort. They had been driven like cattle from Reppen, and came from a home for the aged. This was a sad picture. Several of them had perished on the way, as they could not walk further. These old men were filthy, bleeding and helpless. They had fear in their eyes, and it was a shocking sight. Some of them immediately fell down; they expected help, but we were not able to help them.

A pot of food was fetched, and they put out their trembling hands to take some. I still see myself kneeling on the ground, beside one of these old men, and trying to feed him with a spoon. He was covered with filth and blood. The look in the eyes of this old man I shall never forget. The next day his place was empty. He had died in the night, and like others was covered up somewhere in the earth. There was even one over 80 years of age. We gave them bread, and even tobacco and matches, in order that they could smoke their pipes. Although we ourselves were in a horrible position, it was also our duty to do something for these old men. When I came in the morning, they all came towards me, and one always used to call out: "There is our angel." They lay in different cellars, and died one after the other, except one who got visibly thinner; I did not see him anymore, and he must also have perished somewhere. We did not know their names, for no-one thought of telling another his name. I only know, that they were chiefly pensioned officials.

Our hunger now began to get worse. He, who had no trust in himself and was helpless, perished. When we had received a plate or dish of soup from the kitchen of the militia, and had eaten a few spoonfuls, we felt the eyes of our neighbour upon us, who were waiting to eat something after us. Thus the dish wandered with the same spoon from hand to hand, so that everyone might receive something. If anything had remained over from the barrel, which had been brought in, it was put into preserve tins and kept. We went secretly by a back staircase in this house down into the cellar, where the kitchen was, and snatched a ladelful, which we hastily ate with spoons on the cellar staircase.

One day in February I had to go with others to the Zoological Garden to bury the dead animals there. The ground was frozen hard, and we had to make a large hole with pick-axes. We were surrounded by a guard of Polish militia, and were not allowed to take a breathing space. When the hole was fairly deep, we crept behind a heap of sand to rest for a few moments. The Russians also came round, and fetched the women, for the Poles had no say in the matter. The women were raped any and everywhere, and there were onlookers. Such things happened, even when the cages of the animals were being cleaned, and it was an awful sight.

Gradually the Russians began to realize, that the Germans could work, but that the Poles did not want to do so, as they themselves said. It was then possible to complain, when the Poles beat us during our work.

It once happened, that the Russians came armed with truncheons to find the Poles, who the day before had beaten some women.

Sometimes we met a squadron of German prisoners of war, when we were being led to our work. They looked awful, with limbs and heads bound up with blood stained rags, their feet also in rags, many of them simply dragging themselves along. They were given no food, and we only secretly exchanged looks, and by whispering made them understand, that we were Germans. We were not allowed to speak together.

My mother was one day a witness of how the Russians drove a body of prisoners with truncheons before them; this was in Saarland Street, where there were many people. They fell down, stood up again, and were again beaten, until they fell to the ground again covered with blood. The sight was shocking, but their own comrades were not allowed to help them.

One day my mother, along with other women, had to clean up an officers' mess, that is to say to remove the filth from the cellars. Rotting food, which was already stinking, had to be got out. In the course of the work, the women were for a time locked up, and young hooligans made them parade, and plundered them, for it was always possible occasionally to find a wedding ring, a fountain-pen or a pocket knife. They pushed the women in the back, with their rifle-butts, when they did not go quickly enough for them.

On another day my mother, along with 3 other women, had to go to a house, and remove from a room the corpses of two women, which were wrapped up in rags. These women were alleged to have died of typhus. They were put in a box-cart, and taken to a cemetery in Bunker Street. Here they had to be unloaded and were put, as they were, into a hole in the earth. As the work was not done quickly enough, my mother and the other three women were abused and scolded.

Corpses were always lying about in cellars, in the streets and in huts. It was a shocking sight, miserable figures with dishevelled hair, who had fallen forwards onto their faces. We sometimes whispered to one another: "Yesterday she was moving about, today she appears to be dead." After they had laid there for days, we were fetched, and had to put them in the ground where they happened to be lying, and even if it was a front garden. There were always old people amongst them, who had died of starvation. When one asked those who were still living, if they had relatives, they generally answered: "I don't know, my son or daughter disappeared suddenly."

One day a man was lying in front of the house of the militia, it was a German, who had thrown himself from the roof. We had to dig a hole in an adjacent front garden, to put him in and take him out again, as they wanted to steal his jacket, and then put him in again. Someone took his knife and cut his false teeth out, because he had discovered "gold".

Meanwhile our quarters had been changed, and we had moved to Eichendorff Street, as it was impossible any longer to endure the torment of the first cellar. My Polish employer had helped us to get these quarters. We went down into it by a shaky staircase in pitch darkness. There was even a room for cooking with a wretched stove, everything was black and dirty, but the windows were a little bigger. We dragged our few belongings here, which we had meanwhile stolen, such as old stools, sacks with straw in them, tables and the framework of a wardrobe.

Some other Germans came here, who had no abode anywhere; among them was a previous acquaintance of mine, whom I had discovered in another cellar; his name began with an F., and I had previously had business connections with him. Thus we met again, and he moved into our cellar, and then managed to get hold of all kinds of boards for heating. He hid with us because, like so many other soldiers, he had changed his uniform for civilian dress. These men, however, were in continual fear of being discovered one day.

In this cellar also we had no rest from searchings and controls of the militia and the Russians. They struck the doors with their riflebutts, and crept past the window with their pocket torches. Sometimes these controls sat down in the cellar, remained there for hours, drank and smoked, and did not trouble about our wanting to sleep, as we had to work hard the next day.

I now had a sack of straw, which I could call my own. Our new guest had managed this for me. My mother went with my cousin to a wall over which this straw sack, which belonged to the Russians, fell at a particular spot.

I could now say: "I am now sleeping like the child Jesus, on hay and straw." I had, therefore, a bed like a king.

My mother had dug out a rusty frying pan from a rubbish heap in the yard. We also found stove rings, so that our fireplace was soon complete. We could now heat water and so to speak, do washing. This we hung up on cords over our heads.

I had meanwhile succeeded in getting permission for my mother not to have to work anymore. The new commandant of the militia, who was well-disposed to my mother and myself, but must not allow this to be noticed, began to help us. He had occasionally sent my mother home, and did not detail me for hard work. He established contact for us with the doctor of the Labour Bureau. We had to wait hours and days before it was our turn, because the Poles came first.

We found out, that the wife of the doctor was the daughter of the previous doctor of my grandfather, and that she came from Schmiegel; I thus had a contact here, which was valuable.

Although I had succeeded in getting my mother excused from work, militia men sometimes appeared, and wanted to fetch her, but her certificate saved her from having to go. Now she remained in the cellar, and darned stockings for a Polish family from whom we received food. She had, however, to account for every thread of the darning wool.

One day I had to go with a Polish woman, who wanted a servant girl. When we got to her house, she abused me, and hunted me about saying, that I must clean a stove, and then make a white bed clean with one pail of water. When I said, I ought to do the bed first, she abused me, and interpreted this as refusal to work. She struck me in the face. I did not dare to strike her back or to argue with her, but I clenched my hands in my pockets. My looks showed her enough, and she hit out madly at me, and dragged me to the militia, where she disappeared into the room of the commandant, and complained with loud shrieks of the disobedient German women. The door opened, and I was led in with my bundle in my hand. I saw the commandant in front of me, who merely said: "You? What do I hear about you?" I understood, how he said to the Polish woman, that I was an intelligent girl, and he could not believe anything of this kind about me, but, of course, he was forced to say she was right, and promised to punish me. When she went away, she shouted out: "The pride of these Germans must be broken."

The same day I was given a job as servant at the Polish Chamber of Commerce. Here I was also not received in a friendly way. The rooms, which I had to clean, were very large. There were 10 persons there. I had to be at my work early in the morning, and was hunted about the whole day. They continually kept calling out to me: "Be quick, be quick."

I had to do work, which I should never have expected my former servant-girl to do. I sat a short time at meals, in order to strengthen myself. I had to thoroughly scrub and wash the floors on my knees, and had to fetch water from streets, which were far away, because the watermains were not in order; almost every day I had to beat carpets, and before meals had to wash up several times and cook. I also had to do all the washing, a work which I had never done in this way before, for there were 4 men in the household. When I think of the many shirts to-day and of all the bed linen, I still have a horror. While actually doing the washing, the Polish woman smoking a cigarette stood beside me, arguing, and often tore a piece of washing out of my hands, because I did not do it exactly the way which she wanted. It was an utter martyrdom, which I managed to endure during the day, but when I went down the stairs in the evening, my tears began to come.

In the street I saw my mother sitting on a curbstone waiting for me. She always had a bag with her, in which she collected wood and anything else we could use. Russians with their horses had been quartered in the yard of the Chamber of Commerce, they were simple soldiers, and came towards me asking: "Why are you crying woman?" I said, that the Poles were very horrible to me. They consoled me by giving me something, such as a turnip from their horses and a piece of bread, or, when they saw me coming, they ran towards me saying, that they had already given my mother something. I then found chopped up wood or a huge piece of coal in her bag.

There were also prisoners of war working in the yard, who were chopping up wood. We were allowed to talk together, and gave one another food, cigarettes or tobacco. We had not the time to give one another our names. They received, however, good food from the Russians. They came from the camp of Glovno near Posen and Demsen.

I had to be satisfied, although I had to work exceptionally hard, that I got plenty to eat from these Poles. The cooking was good, and there was plenty of fat in it. In the morning I received a mealsoup and bread for breakfast, as soon as I arrived. Gradually the Polish woman discovered, that I had a certain talent, and used me also for darning and sewing, and was very pleased with my work. She had two sons 15 and 16 years of age, who were very nasty to me. When their mother was not there, they tormented me as much as they could. They hated the Germans, in their boyish way.

They stained their shirts with ink, and covered their fingers with grease. They left all kinds of things lying about in the kitchen, such as shoes and cleaning up rags. They were told by their mother to chop up wood for me, but they did not do this, or only pretended to do so. I also had to prepare the food for the Angora rabbits, but I was always in fear when doing this, in case anything should happen to the animals, and I be blamed for it. The boys made rude remarks to me, and looked at me impudently. However, I had to put up with all this, as I could not box their ears. It became unbearable, and I one day told their mother, that is to say my employer. She then gave the boys a good talking to. She was a very pious Catholic, and gradually saw a fellow human being in me. She began to talk with me as she also spoke German, and one day asked me to bring my mother with me, to help her with knitting and darning.

That was a step forward, but we could not go to work together, for German women were not allowed to be servants, in order that they might not receive food. Likewise German women, who peeled potatoes in other kitchens or did other work in the kitchen, were gradually discharged. My mother now sat in the bay window of the kitchen and darned, sewed, and helped me with washing-up. A lot of visitors came from other places, which caused extra work. But this we gladly did, for we received food, and I was always able to take the remainder out of the pots away with me, in the utensils I always brought with me. Occasionally the Polish woman gave me a loaf.

We received food coupons, but "only for bread", the rest was struck out. That is to say, we received 4 loaves a month, each weighing 1000 grammes. We were able to bath in the bathroom, or to wash our hair in the scullery. But we were unable to change our linen; for weeks and months we had had the same stuff on, day and night. When we washed a chemise, we had to go without one, until it was dry. In the dwelling I ran about bare-footed or in wooden shoes. I was able meanwhile to wash my ski slacks, which I had been continually wearing, and the Polish woman gave me an old dress, which scarcely came down to my knees. It was a funny sight, and I often thought how it would be, if my old acquaintances saw me.

There was plenty to do in the garden, such as sowing seed and watering it. As we had had a garden of our own, this work was not difficult for me, and the Poles praised what I did. It was difficult for me to have to drag the washing on washing days into the garden on my own. I often had to run up and down several times, when it began to rain.

I had the advantage, when I cooked, of learning the Warsaw way. When I state, that when we had dumplings, I had to form and knead 140—150, then this affords a picture of what the cooking work was like. When kneading the dough I ate as much as I wanted, and in the course of time I learned to cook a good quantity, as I knew that I could take away what remained over.

We had to eat secretly, for we were always hungry, and at home we had nothing else. It was impossible to buy anything, as we had no money. I regretted the food, which remained on the plates, for the boys intentionally messed it about, so that it could not be taken away. On my rinsing table I always had a cup underneath some crockery, into which I quickly poured some broth which we had every day, and having covered it up, drank it secretly. In the course of time, I became cunning and began to steal. The food we took away with us, we had to eat somehow or other on the way, as the other Germans in the cellar were ravenous for food, and we had not so much to give away. We continued to visit one another secretly from cellar to cellar, as we were in uncertainty, as to what would become of us, but we always believed there would be help from the other Powers.

In one of these cellars a Baron von W. was living with his wife and newborn child. I often found the baron standing at the washtub and washing children's clothing, but it was, all the same, a rest to have other conversations. One day, when I showed him some photos, we discovered, that the Baron was a former superior officer of my second brother, who previously served with him. In this cellar we made the plan to flee. Everything was considered; we wanted to collaborate with this married couple and a school teacher, and to undertake something in common. Also the Baron enjoyed the sympathy of the commandant, and we must take advantage of this fact. The Baron had also been able to save some valuables, so that there was occasionally good food.

We must get out of this abode, because it was continually getting more insupportable, and the winter was approaching. I now began often to have nerve attacks, and collapsed screaming out: "I can't stand it anymore". This was at my mother's bed, we clung to one another, and hoped for God's help in some form. We had for months had no contact with our relatives who surely thought, that we had perished. These were hours of indescribable despair, accompanied by repeated explosions of hopelessness, so that one felt one was going mad. It was awful to go into the streets, where the Germans could be recognized by their rags and unkemptness. We could say what we thought, because we knew that the other was a German. I had shoes on my feet, from which my toes stuck out. My mother was in the same state. Both, when working in the day and sleeping at night, we always had the same stuff on our bodies.

I was finally one day called to the commandant of the militia who said: "How terribly you're dressed". He had a costume and a dress fetched from my old apartment. I was the next day ordered to come to the militia, and he gave me these things, which were hanging on his wall; he then said: "Turn round". The film "Maidanek" was being played at this time in the cinema[449]). I would very much liked to have seen it, and particularly what they showed in it, and said so to the commandant. First he wanted to send a militiaman with me. The next day he went with me himself. I had to make myself look fine, and my employer lent me a handbag and a hat. He told me not to speak in the cinema, which was visited by Poles and Russians. There were pictures of the camp, and the cross-examinations of the guards by the Russians in the film. Prisoners of different nationalities spoke. Amongst other things, one saw the rooms placarded "Baths", which were declared to be gas-chambers. One saw piles of old clothes and shoes etc. I sat on hot coals, and when the commandant of the militia asked me, after the cinema, what my impression was, I said: "Propaganda"[450]). I then thought. he would eat me up. Up to this point, he had remained very calm, but now made clear to me in emphatic words, that this was not propaganda but fact. He wanted to know the impression made on me as a woman, but I was careful not to tell him, and avoided coming to the point. I was anyway taking a great risk.

I had forgotten to report, how I at the beginning went to the Warthe to load coal in the neighbourhood of the Kernworks. The look of the place was uncanny, all the trees of the parks were bent, and there was confusion and devastation, also huge numbers of dead, which we had to collect together. There were transport columns there, which were loaded with stores from inside the citadel. There were also Poles there, who were here and there stealing sacks. Also here we were hunted about, and it was the same thing as on the battle-fields before Elsenmühle.

Anyway it was impossible for things to go on like this. There must be a change somehow or other.

One day I again smuggled myself into the rooms of the militia. Without knowing Polish, it was impossible to get in, but I observed the sentries, of whom I knew one, and took advantage of the opportunity. I begged heartily for help or advice. It was a great risk, for I must not cause him to be suspected of being pro-German which was a continual danger.

He said to me very quickly: "You must get out, before other orders come". He told me, how I could contact the Russian command headquarters, and gave me the name of an interpreter, who would help me.

This was another risky enterprise, to go to this command headquarters. I succeeded in doing so, along with Mr. von W. We found a Russian, who spoke some German. He was a dark Jewish type, and did not look very promising. We put our requests before him, and received a certificate with a Russian stamp, in accordance with which we were entitled to travel home. There was in the upper left corner of the certificate a notice, that we had to go to a camp near Bromberg, the number being given. When I asked, in surprise, why we must go by way of Bromberg, he answered: "Intelligent woman, every day there goes a goods train to Berlin", and in saying this he put his hand to his head. Happy and thankful we went away. As the date was at the bottom of the certificate, we tore off the top of it. so that only the text could be read, and there was no mention of a transport to a camp. Also my employer gave me a certificate of the Chamber of Commerce, with the same text and a Polish stamp.

My employers understood our situation, and promised to help us. They were, as I already mentioned, very religious, and wanted to act humanely.

Things now proceeded very quickly. We disappeared from our cellar, for no-one must notice our plans, for the whole lot of us in the cellar could unfortunately not go away, Mr. and Mrs K., with whom we worked, hid us for some days in the laundry, which was in the loft. They even put up a bed for us. We were given food, and one day we went to the railway station, with our few belongings in a sack. The chauffeur of my previous employer brought me with my mother to the station, where we also met Mr. von W., his wife, child and the teacher. The chauffeur was to bring us through the barrier, in case Germans were not allowed to go through.

Still today I see us standing there, and awaiting the chance to go through. This chance came, during a quarrel between the Russians and the railway officials. We took advantage of this opportunity, showed our Russian certificate, and got through with the help of the Russians. However, there was no train actually going to the west, there were all kinds of goods trains there, full of people among them many gypsies.

Although we were in rags one could see, that we were Germans. Finally we found a train, which was to go to the west. No-one knew exactly, where it was going, but we took the risk, climbed into a goods wagon, and the train began to go forward with jerks. Also the perambulator with the infant was got in. And so we travelled, continually climbing from one train to another, and finally reached Bentschen. Here it was shocking, a crowd of people, consisting of prisoners, Poles, women and children, all mixed up together. Our last belongings had meanwhile already been stolen. One only needed to turn round, and the bundle was gone.

Here we faced the danger of being checked by the Russians. We smuggled ourselves amongst the Poles, and asked them to hide us from the Russians, who were engaged in separating those capable of working from the aged. There was further the danger that, I should be separated from my mother. It was shocking, in fact the most terrible moments, that I had passed through. My mother got a fit of crying, and I had great difficulty in calming her, in fact I had to hold her mouth closed, in order to distract attention from us The Russians went on with the search, and it is impossible for me to describe these most uncanny moments.

At dawn we climbed along with the von Ws., from whom we had also in the meantime been separated, into another goods train, which finally started.

It was August 1945, and we travelled through localities void of human beings, a no man's land without living creatures, villages completely shot to pieces, everywhere ruins, and a broiling heat. It was a train, the first wagon of which was a goods wagon used by Russians soldiers. The child of von W.

saved us; the Russians climbed, whilst the train was going, onto our wagon, which was a platform car without sides, the parambulator being tied fast; they looked at our certificate, and did nothing to us. They even allowed milk to be warmed for the child on a stove in their wagon. Also Poles climbed onto our wagon, when we stopped anywhere. Then we showed our Polish certificate. It was a very anxious time, for we never knew if we should have to go back.

On the way the train again stopped for hours, then we continued walking and climbed again onto another. Finally we got on to the last train, with which we reached Berlin-Kaulsdorf.

Following her report, the authoress relates the following experiences:

When we were in the cellar in Eichendorff Street, a Pole discovered me, and began to sell me to Russians. He had fixed up a brothel in his cellar for Russian officers. I was fetched by him, as if I had to go to be cross-examined. I had to go with him, and could not resist.

I came into the cellar, in which there were the most depraved carryings on, drinking, smoking and shouting, and I had to participate. Alcohol was given me, and among this a bluish stuff, which tasted like methylated spirits. I sat there without moving and I felt like shrieking.

Then a room was opened, and the door shut behind me. Then I saw, how the Pole did a deal with a Russian, and received money. My value was fixed at 800 zlotys. The Russian then gave me 200 zlotys for myself, which he put in my pocket. I did not give him the money back, because I could buy food for it. Why should I do so? He would not have understood it.

When it lasted too long for the Pole, he knocked on the door for the next one. If I had been alone, and not had my mother with me, I should have committed suicide. I often had a razor-blade in my hand, which I still possess, but I could not do it for my mother's sake.

One day I was ill. We could never clean or wash ourselves. In my fear, of what the illness might be, I went quickly to the commandant of the militia, and asked him for help. He requested an examination in the policlinic, and also a thorough treatment, for which he gave the money. The doctors and lady doctors were in fact very nice, but there were some doctors, who on principle did not trouble themselves about Germans. I had luck with a lady doctor, who was from Warsaw. She talked with me. It was, however, unpleasant to go to the hospital clothed in rags. We had no clean linen, but we had to go all the same. First we assumed, that we were pregnant from the Russians, as our menstruation had stopped for months. This, however, indicated nothing, for this condition lasted all the time during the whole of our internment, and did not become normal again, until we were back in Germany. The examination in the hospital indicated, that we were not pregnant.

My employer K. was continually after me, and followed me even when I went into the cellar. I was chased about like a frightened deer, he even turned up in the wash-house if he thought I was there. We often had a struggle, but how was I to escape him.

I could not run away, or complain to anyone, but had to keep to my work, as I had my mother with me. I did as little as I could. It was, however, not possible to avoid everything. I do not know, what would have happened, if the wife of my employer had noticed anything.

The administrator of our cellar tried the same kind of thing. He ordered me to come to his dwelling, and first of all pretended to sympathize with me, but I finally saw what he wanted. This was horrible, like all the attempts of men to have me, as I was defenseless.

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Eyewitness report of the typist P. L. of Lodz
Original. 1949.

Treatment of the Germans, and particularly of the children in the camp at Potulice

As a result of the quick Russian advance I, like so many other people, could not flee, and had to remain with my child in January 1945 in Poland. Soon after the German collapse I was put into one of the labour camps for Germans. I left my child with another German woman[451]).

Immediately after being put into the camp, our money, our valuables, and every kind of sharp thing, even pencils were taken away from us. Further good linen, garments, stockings and even food was taken from us, in short everything which those who controlled us thought would be useful for themselves. Prayer books, saving accounts documents and even family photos were torn up, and thrown at our feet.

Our valuables were taken from us, with the remark, that they would be returned to us, when we were discharged from the camp. This actually happened. However, on the occasion of the last control before we were transported to the *Reich,* the things disappeared again, which had just before been returned to the owner, and after he had signed out for them. They came into the hands of the militia, who searched us. Under the pretext of searching for stolen property belonging to the camp, feather-beds were slid up, so that the feathers flew about in the air. But we readily suffered all that, for after often having been prisoners for years, we finally saw the vision of freedom, which was more precious than any other valuable thing.

After we had been distributed to our huts, we had to parade in front of the huts, and to paint swastikas with luminous paint on the backs of the dresses or mantels of our neighbours. This swastika had to be very large, so that it could be seen from afar, that we were Germans.

A few days later a Russian commission of inspection, which was in the camp, ordered the swastikas to be removed. We had trouble, however, in removing the paint, and holes were often rubbed in the clothes, and traces of the paint remained. Instead of the swastika on the back, we now had to wear a small one, made of paper or cloth, on the left breast, and a few days later, this was changed into a capital "N", for "niemka", which means German. But soon that also dissappeared, and instead of that we had to wear a small "w", which stands for "wiezniarka", which means prisoner.

At the end of 1945, when a new Polish chief doctor came into the camp, he put into practice the brilliant idea of marking all Germans, by having their hair cut, so that it was only 1 centimetre long; this was done with both men and women. Those, working in offices, had the luck, that their hair was only cut, until it was 4 centimetres long. Every month our hair was cut again, in order that it did not grow beyond the regulation length.

The hair in the arm-pits, and everywhere on the body where it grew, was shaved. It was alleged, that this was done, in order to prevent the outbreak of an epidemic of typhus. As a matter of fact, the whole procedure was nothing but a piece of chicanery. The chief doctor, who called himself a martyr of Auschwitz because he had been in the camp there, took pleasure in seeing how many of the German women could not help crying, when their hair was cut off.

Often the supervisor of the camp and militia men came to watch the scene, when our hair was being cut. And we poor German women had to sit quite naked along the walls in the dressing room of the shower-baths, and were exposed to the lewd gazes and impertinent jokes of the spectators. The shaving, moreover, was done by male internees, although there were female hairdressers among the occupants of the camp. The chief aim, however, was to humiliate us women as far as possible.

If any woman resisted against having her hair cut or shaved, she was shut up naked in the air-raid shelter and not let out, until she was willing to submit to the procedure.

Once a month, there was a so-called "Scabies examination" before the chief doctor, and we had to go past him quite naked. The women, whom he selected, mostly had no signs of scabies, but had the bad luck to strike his eye, perhaps because as Germans they still had good figures. They were particularly tormented by the chief doctor, who found the most hypocritical excuses for doing so.

Others had the "luck" of having to do domestic work for the chief doctor, and were exposed to his persecutions. If they did not yield to him, they were sent back to the camp under the pretence of having stolen cigarettes or other things. They were then subjected to cross-examinations, and shut up for as much as 14 days in the air-raid shelter, that is to say in a damp cellar without windows, where there was nothing to sit down upon, except the damp earth. In the course of this punishment, they were also beaten.

When they were discharged from the air-raid shelter, they had to do the hardest work, that is to say, they had to drag the waggon, which regularly fetched boards and other timber for building purposes from the saw-mill, which was an hour away, to the carpenter's shop. This was terribly toilsome, in rainy weather, in the heat of summer, or when it was frosty, for people who had to drag the waggon instead of horses. If there happened to be among the sentries, guarding the waggon, one who particularly hated the Germans, then they were also beaten

The quarantine huts were particularly favourites of the chief doctor, in these huts the arrivals had to remain 14 days. The only ones, who were spared this, were the first Germans, who arrived in the camp between February and April 1945. Then there was no water for shower-baths, and the delousing installation did not work.

During the quarantine time, we had to sleep in pairs or even in threes and fours in the narrow three-storey wooden beds, which we called "bug cases". We had no sack of straw, and lay on bare boards without rugs. Feather-beds were not allowed in the camp, and if anyone brought one with him, it was taken from him and put into the stores.

The windows of the quarantine huts had to remain open day and night, whether it was summer or winter. It is, therefore, not surprising, that it was too cold for the occupants, and that, when they thought the chief doctor was not there, they shut the windows. They, of course, did not know, that the awful man might suddenly appear in the hut, or see that the windows were shut.

The result was, that the occupants of the room had to stand quite naked for 2—3 hours with the window open. Often they were forced also as a punishment to hop up and down in the hut passage, and if they did not do this with agility, were kicked and cursed at. Or sometimes the chief doctor poured a bucket of water onto the floor of the passage in the hut, and this had to be thoroughly wiped dry within ten minutes. Generally a woman had to do this, and chafed her knees until they bled, as she slipped about on the rough stones of the floor in the passage, in order to clear the water away. The chief doctor stood behind her, driving her on with curses and kicks. It is no wonder, that the people longed for the day, on which the quarantine period would be at an end, and they could go to work.

Every occupant of the camp had to work, unless he collapsed from weakness, and came into the hospital. However, there also the conditions were bad. There was a lack of medicaments, of bandaging stuff, and fuel, also the food was not much different from the ordinary food in the camp. It was there where the chief doctor behaved in the most horrible manner, and made the lives of the patients into a hell.

There was no payment for work done, and we had to work for very sparse food, and were often very roughly treated. Superfluous workers were organized into labour commandos of ten persons or more, and were sent to do agricultural work under the supervision of militia sentries on state farms and in villages. The payment made to the camp for the internees was about one tenth of what a Polish worker received, and he was also given first class food, and did not work more than 8 hours a day.

The Germans, on the other hand, had to be up and on their feet by sunrise in the summer, and did not stop work, until it was dark. What did they get for this? From most of the farmers and on the large farms generally only a milk soup and potatoes in the morning and in the evening. Also bread was very scarce. It was very seldom, that the farmers voluntarily gave the Germans a little pocket money; and this was prohibited by the camp command, as it afforded the Germans the possibilitiy of saving and running away.

The treatment was very bad, and particularly the women were regarded as free game, and they could not defend themselves, because they were outlaws. If they resisted, they were brought back to the camp under the pretext of having refused to work, were cross-examined countless times, were shut up in the air-raid shelter, beaten and then employed on the very hardest work in the camp itself. The same happened to many women, who were suddenly sent back to the camp, because they were pregnant. Also the guilty Pole was called to account, and had to pay a fine, but what is that in comparison with the beatings, and the dirty and rough words, which the German women had to suffer.

There were also cases, where the Germans worked for decent persons, and received good food, some money and also the necessary clothes, but this was very seldom. The German was regarded as a slave and a good worker. It was well known, that many farmers did not obey the order to bring the Germans back to the camp, in order that they be sent away to the Reich. They were quite willing to bribe the administration of the camp, in order to keep the internees as long as possible. One often heard the very naive question: "Who is going to work, if you take the Germans away from us?" These Poles thought, the Germans would remain forever there as slaves.

Unfortunately the poor Germans in the camp thought, that it would be long before they would again live as free people. It was no wonder then, that those working outside the camp made attempts to run away. Many succeeded, but it was a wretched lot for anyone, who was caught. He was of course, brought back to the camp, where severe punishment awaited him. What first happened was, that he was confined for some weeks in the air-raid shelter on bread and water, or on half camp rations. Then came the cross-examinations, and he was asked where he wanted to go to, where he had got the money from, who had helped him, etc., and he was also, of course, thrashed.

He, who was caught on the flight, had for some days to stand in the middle of the camp square in front of the barracks, motionless and with his hands behind his head, and had at regular intervals of an hour his ears boxed by militia men who went by. I remember a German soldier, who was a prisoner of war in the camp, and worked as a craftsman, and was caught on an attempt at flight. I still see the picture before me of how he was standing on the camp square, during a bitter frost motionless with his arms above him, and it looked as though he would not be able to hold out in the cold. When he was about to collapse, he was dragged into the air-raid shelter, and received his thrashing. The same thing happened the next day, but, as the man again collapsed, he was left in the air-raid shelter, until they had got him so far with their brutal treatment, that he was brought into the camp hospital to become convalescent.

The result of the treatment, conducted by the chief doctor, was that this young man, who had before been quite healthy, died after a short time. The chief doctor shouted and roared at him, when he answered his question as to where the stripes and bruises on his back came from by saying, that they came from a thrashing, which he had had in the air-raid shelter; for officially, beating of the internees was forbidden, but the beatings took place, where no-one could see them; and to whom was it possible for a German to complain. It would never be admitted, that he was in the right. On the contrary there was often brutal retaliation.

The chief doctor was responsible for very much of the ill-treatment of the internees, and it was due to this, that a young girl hanged herself in the toilet of the hut, because he did not leave her in peace. When this devil in the form of a human being was finally withdrawn from his job, because of his health, the internees began to breathe more freely, but nevertheless, life in the camp did not get much better.

If one was occupied in the workshops, one was not safe from the denunciations of one's own comrades, who hoped in this way to do a favour to the Poles, and to have a better life themselves. It was quite easy to get put into the air-raid shelter, where one often had to stand up to one's knees in lime-water, and was dragged from one cross-examination to another, being thrashed in between. The point was to give information about one's fellow countrymen, or, more plainly stated, to betray them. One was called upon to say, who one's friends were, where letters were secretly sent and who did it, etc. One was also called upon to make statements against Polish officials.

The most cunning means were employed to get the people to talk. This was not always done by means of the air-raid shelter. Oh no, they were also humane, and did not want anything gratis. Promises were, therefore, made such as, that one would be discharged from the camp, and would get a good job, and not only that, but that as long as one was in the camp one would be treated better. Then dainties and milk and the best cigarettes were offered to those being questioned and postage stamps, etc., were given them.

Considering the conditions in the camp, this was by no means a light temptation, and many a one yielded to it.

And what was the end? After the person in question had done what was required of him, and caused himself to be despised by all decent people, he was dropped by the Poles, and put again to the hard work on the wagon. The Germans of absolutely bad character were liberated, but had to agree to work for the Polish Secret Service, and that consisted in spying on people, who were suspected by this service.

The directors of these awful cross-examinations were officers of the Special Service, known in abbreviated form as "Spec." They were mostly 22—25 years of age, had had no military career, but had been raised to the rank of officers, because of special work they had done. We won't deal with the intelligence or education of these men, they were famous for their very lowest Polish and Russian curses.

I experienced such cross-examinations myself, and still think of them with horror. They fetched me at all times of the day, and even in the night.

Then I made the acquaintance of the fearful air-raid shelter, where I was only four hours, but that was in February; I was half undressed, and had to continue standing in the ice-cold, pitch-dark cellar, for there was nowhere to sit down, except on the ground which was frozen hard. They threatened not to let me out again, until I made the statement required of me. Every hour the "Spec." came to the door, and asked if I was prepared to give evidence. I don't know, why I was let out after 4 hours, although I had refused to make a statement. I was offered hot milk and thickly buttered bread, in order to warm myself up. I was, however, so upset with the excitement and the shock, that I had no appetite, so that it was not difficult for me to resist the temptation.

The climax was reached a few days later in a cross examination, to which I was fetched in the middle of the night, and brought to the guest-house of the camp administration behind the big gate. It seemed to me inconceivable, that after such a very long time I was in a nicely furnished room, and could sit in a well-upohlstered armchair with delicious smelling coffee and beautiful cake in front of me. The man, who cross-examined me, in the course of an ordinary conversation, was not a camp "Spec.", but a senior officer in Russian uniform. In spite of his pleasant behaviour, I could not tell him more than what I had already always said. I drank the coffee, which he poured out for me, as I simply had to drink it, in order to overcome my sleepiness and to calm my palpitating heart. The beautiful cake, however, did not entice me to eat it.

Anyway, I was relieved, when the cross-examination was over. I did not have to wait long to experience the consequences, as I had expected and worried about. They were not satisfied with my statements, and a few days later I was removed from my work, which was to some extent favourable, and was sent to work outside.

There I was able to see my child again, after a separation of one and a half years, and it is not necessary to describe what my feelings were, when I pressed my little son to my heart with tears in my eyes. He did not recognize me, and no longer spoke a word of German, but God had taken the child under his protection, and brought it to good people. The child had come with a German woman, with whom I had left him, into another camp, and from there to farmers, that is to say, the woman and he were, as it were, under their protection. He had stolen carrots in his hunger, but when German children were given to Polish families, my child was lucky enough to go to very decent people, who treated him as their own child. Thus I found him well brought up and clothed, a good bit grown and well fed. That made the new separation easier for me, for it was not possible for me to keep him with me, but I had the opportunity of seeing him again from time to time.

The lot of many other mothers with their children was much worse. Children between 4 and 14 years of age, who were not subject to being put into a camp, but came to one with their mothers, were in May 1945 simply taken away from them, put into trucks and removed. I can still hear the weeping of the mothers and the screaming of the children, when they were torn apart.

Sometimes mothers and children met again unexpectedly in the camp; such meetings showed what these mothers and children were suffering.

Some mothers have had good luck, and know by chance where their children are, but many do not even know today, where to look for them. In our camp nothing could be found out, as no note had been made of where they had come to, or who had taken them into their care. Some German hut seniors, who had gone with the trucks to supervise the children, told us that the children were simply taken out of the trucks on the way by farmers, many of whom regarded the half-grown children as welcome workers. The children then had to look after cattle, and often had to do hard work, for which they were not strong enough, such as dragging the plough and chopping wood. In tatters and as bodily wrecks they were brought back, after months or even years into the camps by the farmers, when the latter were called upon to do this, as the transport of children was to depart for the *Reich*. The mothers in most cases, had been sent somewhere else to work, and did not know that their children were already on their way to Germany; when they themselves at last got back to the *Reich,* they had to appeal to all kinds of organizations, in order to find their children again.

Most of the small children, who had been taken away, were put into orphanages, and often did not have enough to eat, and many of them died. Those, who had the luck to return and to find their mothers again in the camp, did not know them and only spoke Polish. As most of the mothers did not understand a word of Polish, it was very difficult for them to understand their children.

There were also cases, where Poles who had accepted a German child, regarded it as their property, and would not return it to its mother. They demanded the return of the expenses they had had for the child. Where could the poor German mother find the money after practically all her belongings had been taken from her, before she was put into the camp where she lost the rest and worked for years without pay.

Such cases were, therefore, simply filed, and the mothers had to wait and see what would happen.

New children, who came with their mothers into the camp, if they were more than 6 years old, were separated from them, and came into special boys or girls huts, which were in charge of German hut seniors. The children were, therefore, absolutely separated from their mothers, and might only see them on Sundays for one or two hours; they thus led a fairly miserable existence.

If any mother tried to give her child an extra piece of bread from her own through the barbed wire, she must take care not to get caught, or else she would have a good chance of being confined in the air-raid shelter. When the weather was good, the children had to march up and down on the dusty ground in front of their hut, which was surrounded by barbed wire and must sing loudly, of course, only Polish songs, in order that they could do something when the "Spec." came to them.

The smaller children sat in dusty, dirty sand, and played with little stones, bits of paper and suchlike things, as they had no toys. In bad weather they all sat in the hut, and passed the time in the same way as outside. For some time there were schools for the elder children, but only in the Polish language, although the teachers were interned Germans. Meanwhile these children came to the *Reich,* and school teaching in the camps came to an end.

On Sunday afternoon the children were allowed to go to the cinema for camp officials, which was outside the barbed wire. But what were they shown? Chiefly the Russian news-reel, and Russian as also Polish war and propaganda films. One of the "Specs" was fond of children, and if they sang and marched well gave them bon-bons and apples, but they heard awful cursing words from him, and the boys were enlightened on matters, which could only be harmful for them.

This "Spec" had made a "little Spec" of one of the boys, who always accompanied him, received good clothes and extra food. The "little Spec" was, however, well hated by his playmates or companions. It was his job to tell the "Spec" secretly all the children had done, which was wrong. Also when the "Spec" inspected the huts of the grown-ups, he brought his little assistant with him. If a cup of coffee or soup, which had remained over from the midday meal, happened to be in a room of the hut, the "little Spec" had the duty, when ordered by his "master", of throwing the contents of the cups into the face or on the head of any of the women happening to be in the room.

What was the good of giving the children better food, and this as we heard, thanks to the Foreign Red Cross, when these children were spiritually ruined.

In the first months of the year 1945 the mortality among the small children and infants was very high; they simply had to starve to death. There was nothing for them but eternally cabbage soups, sour and sweet cabbage and rotting cabbage. It was all mostly water, in which a few leaves floated for decoration. There were practically no potatoes at all, and meat? Yes, one often saw a dead horse lying behind the hut in the blazing summer heat covered with flies. And the next day, when one came at noon to the hut, one was satiated with the mere stink of the meat.

Infants received a little milk, but that was not enough. Generally, they did not live to be more than 3 months old — a consolation for those mothers, who had got the child against their will from a Russian.

But the mortality amongst the infants had still decreased very little, because the hygienic conditions were very bad. There was a lack of everything, especially napkins and linen. Moreover, those whose duty it was to do so, troubled themselves very little about the children. The mother worked all the time and was very seldom able to give the child the breast.

There were mothers, who had lost 2 and 3 children in the camp, but their hands were bound, and they could not save the little ones. There were cases, where not a single member of a family of 3 or 4 survived.

The way, in which one passed one's day in the camp, could not be called life. It was a state of vegetating away in the continual hope of once again becoming a free being.

One day was like the other, and one hardly noticed when it was Sunday, although we then worked only until midday; the afternoon passed slowly, and we did not know what to do. We were punished, if we went to other huts to visit relatives or acquaintances. The huts were separated from one another by barbed wire, and even married people required special permission, in order to be allowed to pass an hour together on Sundays. Whether they got this permission depended upon the humour, in which the Polish official was, who was on duty on Sunday.

There was a period, during which those working in offices and particularly the women, were sent to do hard work on Sunday mornings in the fields and elsewhere; this work had to be finished by midday. For instance, turnips and potatoes had to be hoed, or they had to help with harvesting of hay and grain. This was by no means easy, particularly as one knew, that there was a militia man behind one, who would drive one on with curses and blows. The women were employed on Sundays in the forenoon for clearing up snow outside the camp. This gave satisfication to the Poles, who passed by when they were coming back from church.

It even happened, that a militia man, if he felt he was not being observed, made all the women and girls from the office parade in front of the hut.

This he did, when the others were already at work, because the women from the office had to begin half an hour later. Then he searched them for pencils, money, matches and cigarettes, and compelled them to do gymnastic exercises. They had to do knee bending, hop about and lie down and stand up on the earth, which was hard frozen; this they had to do so quickly, that it was often not possible for them to stand up again quickly enough.

It is clear, that the elder women (and some of them were 50 years of age and even older) were not able to do this. However, the militia men had no consideration for them, and any woman who was too slow received a good kick, and was addressed with the filthiest kinds of words.

When the gymnastic exercises were over, the women had to listen to the following address: "You claim to belong to the intelligentsia but you know what you are? You are sows. In Democratic Poland we don't require an intelligentsia".

The views of this "Polish Democrat" had no effect upon the women, who were pleased that the tormenting gymnastics were finished, and that they could go to work.

They only regretted, that they were powerless, and could say nothing to such individuals, or that they at least could not spit in their faces as they deserved.

Also on such holidays as Christmas and Easter there was little change in our sad days. The only difference was, that on the first festal day instead of the usual water soup we received stew, and did no work. And yet we were happy, when these days had passed, because then one was continually thinking of one's dear ones, and of the times, when one was still with them.

This almost caused one's heart to break.

It was impossible to describe this time as a happy Christmas, even although there was a huge Christmas tree, lit up in the evening with coloured lamps, on the ground in front of the huts. We were by no means in the mood to sing Christmas songs, when we were told we were to assemble for this purpose around the Christmas tree, but we had to obey. Anyway there was not much singing, for after a few Polish Christmas songs had been sung and someone suddenly began to sing the German Christmas song "Silent night, holy night", the song was interrupted, and we had to go back into the huts. That was, of course not a nice end.

The authoress now reports that on summer evenings we had to sing. This was mostly organised as a means of chicanery against those, who did not speak Polish.

There was occasionally Divine Service for the internees, but only for Catholics; this was held in a large room of a hut, which was otherwise empty. It could hardly be said, that there was in this case a feeling of piety, such as comes over anyone, when entering a church. The people went to these services, after which there was holy communion, for they hoped to find consoltation for their heavy hearts. But they were mostly disappointed, and were torn out in the midst of the sacred proceeding.

Although the service began at 6 o'clock in the morning, because the people had to begin working at 8 o' clock, the time was too short for everyone to take part in communion. When it was time to line up for work, the people were simply fetched out of the service, and the clergyman, who came from outside the camps, was left standing there alone.

Here the authoress reports on the continual rumours, which particularly concerned the end of the time of internment, and also on a series of low-down and horrible chicanery, mostly in the form of repeated controls, which kept the occupants of the camp in incessant agitation.

These controls were directed particularly against the huts of the women, and the women gradually became so accustomed to them, that they were not ashamed of jumping in and out of bed, in front of the men inspecting, although they were in quite short shirts. For the women had received from the camp men's shirts and pants for sleeping, and were not allowed to wear anything else. Such nightly visits were particularly unpleasant for such women, who had had to work until 11 o'clock at night, and who were disturbed in their rest, before they had scarcely had time to go to sleep.

In the first month of the year 1945 these nightly visits caused particular agitation. For every other day militia men with truncheons came to every hut, being led by a senior officer. If they found the slightest thing, which was not in order in the room, for instance a dish which had not been washed or a speck of dust on the floor, all the occupants of the room had to jump out of their beds, and run around outside the hut in the frosty night, through the deep snow and with bare feet. While doing this, they had to sing "Everything passes by, everything has an end, my husband is in the east, and his bed is empty". Or they had to dance up and down in the corridor of the hut, while the truncheons of the militia men were swung round their heads, ears and legs. The cries of the women were heard distinctly by those in the other huts, who became too terrified to sleep, because they knew that the same thing would happen the next evening in their own huts.

The men were thrashed even more, and finally the militia proceeded to force one of the German seniors in the huts to beat their own comrades on being ordered to do so. The son had to beat his own mother, and had not the courage to refuse, because he was afraid of being beaten himself.

Later on the beatings at night ceased, and were transferred to the day. Those controlling, passed through the huts at night, noted the rooms in which everything was not in order as desired, and then one was perhaps surprised the next day at the midday meal, when some militia men came, ordered the women to lay over a stool, and gave them 10—15 strokes with the truncheon.

For a time there was a local commandant, apparently a sadist, who took young women, of whom he liked the looks, and beat them on the smallest pretence. The next day he made each of them show their naked bottoms, in order to see if there were traces of the truncheon blows. He then had the impudence, after having beaten the women, to offer them his hand, with the words: "I bear you no grudge, and you bear me no grudge, but I had to beat you". This man was a Pole from Danzig, and generally spoke German to the internees. What can one say to such a thing? One could hardly stand for pain, but was forced to give one's tormentor one's hand.

Thank God, that is no more done today in the camp, but our lives have not become much more supportable. One is being ruined morally and spiritually, and there come days of utter despair .

All that could bring joy in the terrible camp life was a letter from one's dear ones far away, but unfortunately one did not often have the luck to receive such a letter. Generally, the letters were delayed 3—4 months, until they were censored and delivered. Then, they were of course, out of date. Most of the letters were put in the fire, just as most ot the letters which the interness were allowed to write twice a month. Either the Poles did not think it worthwhile to take the trouble to censor the letters, or their object was to let the interness get as few news as possible from outside. Things were better in the case of registered letters, which one received only a few days after they had arrived.

And thus parents waited in vain for news from their sons and daughters, and husbands and wives for a sign, that the other party was living. These poor people finally did not know how to find out where their dear ones were.

The authoress now describes how carelessly the packets containing food were stored away. These were packets for the internees from their relatives, and they were distributed with the greatest recklessness.

A few words must now be said about the visits, which the interness were allowed to receive once a month. It was hardly possible to call them visits. There was only a short talk of fifteen minutes, although the visitor had travelled kilometres by train and walked for about an hour, in order to have this conversation of a few minutes. If they were lucky, they could speak together. Numerous visitors, however, finally had to go away without being let in, after they had stood for hours in snow or rain outside the gate. The reason for this was, that no Polish official was present to supervise the interness and guests.

The conversations took place behind a fine wire netting, on the one side of which the internee stood and on the other side the visitor. One could not give one another one's hand; this was to prevent the handing over of letters, cigarettes or other things; further one could not see distinctly through the fine netting. One had to speak loudly, for, as there were about 20 people speaking at the same time on each side of the netting, it was not easy to understand. In consequence the supervising Polish official also did not understand much of what was said.

In German times, the Poles in the camp were allowed to receive their guests in their huts, where they were housed in families, but the Poles kept married people and their children separated from one another. And yet in German times it was a punishment camp, but with the Poles it was an internee one, for there were no prisoners there for punishment, as such were put at once into prison.

Under such circumstances it is no wonder, that everyone's sole wish and thought was for the day of removal to come at last. But meanwhile months had passed, and we were in the next year, so that our hopes were all shattered Instead of being discharged we were again cross-examined for the third and fourth time, and continually asked whether we wanted to remain in Poland or go to Germany. On one occasion there came a commission from the chief town in the district, and then, as a change, from Warsaw. And they always told those, who wanted to go to Germany, how bad it was there, that there was nothing to eat, and that one had better possibilities in Poland of advancement.

When we remained firm, we were told that for the time being no transports had been planned, and that we must count upon remaining at least another year in the camp, as there was no possibility of taking the internees away. And that, when there were transports, these would proceed exclusively to the Russian, and never to the West zones.

We asked ourselves why the Poles wanted to keep us Germans in Poland, and the only answer we found was: in order to have cheap workers. For when those, who received Polish citizenship, were discharged, although most of them refused it and were finally expelled, they only got the lowest grade work in Poland, unless they joined the Polish Workers Party, the Communists. By this procrastination the Poles succeeded in retaining the workers a few months longer.

Internees, who were liberated as Polish citizens, had, before leaving the camp, to sign an undertaking that they would never speak about what they had seen or experienced in the camp and were assured that, if they said anything, they would again be put into the camp.

Those, who were waiting for transport, were advised to write to their relatives, and ask them to send an official permit to move into the town where they were, in order that they might be sent away as soon as this was received.

In reality things were quite different, for people, who were employed in the office, or as skilled workers in workshops, were not put at all onto the transports lists; neither permits to move into a town nor expulsion orders made any difference. It often happened, that such certificates were simply torn up, when they were found in a hut on the occasion of an unexpected control, or when the people owing them showed them to the Polish officials. In some cases they were simply filed, and that was the end of the matter.

The best thing in the camp was to belong to the great mass, and not to be distinguished either by one's work or special intelligence; in that way one had the best chance of getting out, for as a reward for good work one was kept longer, and that is a fact. The fine promises of the Polish manager were of no avail, when he gave his word of honour time and again, that one would get away with the next transport.

When the next transport came then he said, he had no substitute and one had to wait, and longingly and sometimes enviously watch those, who had the luck to get away. For one is, after all, only human, and asked oneself: "why do I have such bad luck?"

And when one had really passed through the gate, one could not believe, that this miserable captivity was now really at an end. One was accompanied by a militia man or one of the "Specs" to the nearest railway station, and this man tried till the very end to vent his hatred on the Germans, by forcing them to walk more quickly, and by emphasizing his orders by beating them with his belt. But that one did not feel it any longer, as everything would soon be over.

The moment was at last there, and we were in the goods wagon of the transport train, and on the way to our dear ones. One can understand, that German folk songs resounded from all the wagons; and this was quite a different scene from the singing we had been forced to do in the camp.

Third Section

DRIVING OUT AND EXPULSION OF THE GERMAN POPULATION FROM THE TERRITORIES TO THE EAST OF THE ODER AND NEISSE

No. 289

Eyewitness report of the farmer's wife Elisabeth Westphal of Wurow, district of Regenwalde in Pomerania
Original. 1. December 1952. 8 pages.
Printed in part.

Expulsion on the 26. June 1945[452]), tramp across the Oder as far as Pasewalk

In the first part of her report the authoress describes how the village was overrun by the Red Army, when the population was beginning to flee, and how life slowly became again normal after the first turbulent period. Then she continues:

On the 24. June 1945 there were many Polish soldiers in our village; many of them could speak broken German. These men had occasionally related, that the Germans had got to get out into the new Germany, on the other side of the Oder. We had not heard how things were going in Germany, except for a few leaflets on which were the words: "Hold out. We are coming back." We did not believe the Poles, for the Russians had conquered us. However, on Tuesday, the 26. June 1945, it turned out to be true. All at once the village was full of Polish soldiers. Suddenly 4 men came to our house, and ordered us to be ready in half an hour, and to parade at the farm. The children were still working in the field, and I fetched them quickly. We put on the best clothes we had, and which the Russians had not found as we had hidden them. Then we put old and ragged stuff over them.

The 4 Polish soldiers did not leave our house again, but urged us to be quick. We packed some things in rucksacks and bags, also food. Up to then we had had food enough, as I still had four cows, three pigs, two young goats, three sheep, hens and a goose. Now everything fell into the hands of the Poles. There was great excitement and fear, for none of us believed, that we should get to Stettin on the other side of the Oder. They had always told us lies, and we did not believe them, but we were afraid of being sent to Siberia. Some families had hidden, and followed later by train.

When we lined up, our baggage was searched, and what they liked they took away from us. The old people were loaded into farm-carts, and were to be conveyed in this way. When they reached the pond at Hüller's on the way to the railway station, they had to get out of the carts again. For the Russian commissar had arrived, and ordered that all must get down and walk. This commissar lived in Neukirchen and along with his commandants had several villages under him. When we passed by, some of the old people joined us, the rest went back, and our aunt Lüdtke has been missing since then.

We now went by way of Prützhow to Labes, remained there a night, and asked the commandant, if we had got to leave Pomerania, who answered us: "Sooner or later you will have to go[453])". Some, nevertheless, went back to Wurow. It was cruel, that we were driven out of our home in this way. We now went across the Oder by way of Winningen, Freienwalde, Stargard, Moritzfelde, Finkenwalde to Podejuch. We were near to desperation on the way, but God helped us, and many a Russian was an angel of salvation. The children suffered fearfully from hunger, but many a Russian gave them bread. The Poles never did so. Just before we came to Löcknitz, a Russian gave my little daughter, who was 4 years old, meat and bread, and then said: "Eat, I also have children, who always like to eat." We then moved on to Pasewalk, from where everyone went his own way.

No. 291

Eyewitness report of the farmer's wife Anna Kientopf of Machuswerder, district of Friedeberg in Pomerania

Attested copy. 15. August 1950. 77 pages.
Printed in part[454]).

Expulsion from the villages in the fen district of the Netze about the 1. July 1945, and the miserable tramp across the Oder as far as Fürstenwalde

In the first 40 pages of her report, the authoress describes the invasion of the Russians and her experiences during the time of the Russian occupation, until she was expelled.

It was towards the end of June, when the report went round: "The Germans must get out." We could not believe this, and the news so paralysed us, that we had no more desire to work. The horse, which I had borrowed from the farm, was fetched away, and we were made anxious by the news, that the inhabitants of the parish of Althaferwiese had already got out. Each person was allowed to take a hand-cart with him, and 40 pounds of luggage. The same day the village of Netzbruch was expelled. Everyone had to leave house and home, within half an hour. These were the 2 localities, where my brothers lived. In the last days of June 1945, everyone was driven out of these places. We now began to pack things in sacks, as we had been told, that this was safer than trunks. Mr. Wagner made 2 small two-wheeled carts, with the wheels of an old coach. If the things were properly packed, we could get a good number in.

On Sunday, the 1. July 1945, at 5.30 in the afternoon the mayor of Gottschimmerbruch appeared, and 2 Polish policemen, the Russian policeman from the farm, and a number of young Ukrainians with them, and they shouted: "You must get out in 30 minutes." My little daughter Rosemarie, who was then 7 years old, was lying in bed with a temperature of 39° Centigrade. I had already put Brigitte to bed, who was 2½ years old, and the twin sister of Ulrich. My son Wolfgang, who was 15 years old and the eldest, had gone to grandma, and the 2 sisters had gone at midday to Mrs. Kronberg. Annelore my eldest daughter, who was then 13 years old, had to rush about and fetch the others. I began to do the rest of the packing, and to bring the things outside, but the hand-cart was not yet there, as Mr. Wagner was still working on it. I asked to be allowed to take a light farm-cart for one horse. The Russian would not allow this, but the Pole allowed it. They all stood by with their watches in their hands. We had known, that this would come, but all the same we were taken by surprise, and many things were forgotten. Even my valuables were left lying on the rafters of the vestibule. The absent children were at last there, and I got my 2 children out of bed, and simply put cloaks around them. Some clothing I threw over the sacks.

We moved off with our cart, as also the Poles and the Russian. We were surprised, that they went away so quickly, but later on we heard, that they had not yet the right to expel us, that it was a mistake, and that the people of Friedbergschbruch did not need to go, until Monday the 2. July 1945. But now we had done so, as we did not know at the moment, what the situation was. It was very difficult to push the cart, and Wolfgang said: "I will go and fetch the horse, and perhaps we shall be able to reach Neumecklenburg, when Wagner has finished the cart." We did this, and Wolfgang drove straight across the fields, in order that the horse might not be taken from us, and all went with him.

I remained further behind, and went slowly. I often looked back, the farm was in the evening sun; it was an old farm, where I had been born. My parents had lived and worked there before us, and had been buried in the cemetery in Friedbergschbruch. But now strangers came, and hunted us out. The sheep and cows were peacefully grazing. Who would milk them this evening and the following days? And what were the children to eat; they would miss the milk. I had with me bread, some bacon and lard, and also meat. But when that had been eaten up, what would happen? I had some idea of the misery, which was approaching us, but I had not conceived of it to its full extent. For I still had confidence and courage.

Wolfgang had halted behind a rye-field, which was getting ripe. There I first dressed the children, and we changed our clothes. Then we went further. Behind us there was a safe warm home, ripening grain fields, blossoming potato-fields, and grazing cows with full udders. In front of us was the endless grey road and uncertainty. We still had no idea of what was awaiting us on the edge of the street. If we could only get away from the Poles and Russians and get to Germany, where we hoped to find people, who must understand us, and help us to bear this last blow, which was the hardest of all.

Our first halt was Neumecklenburg, and we found Mr. Wagner and Mrs. Lenz. There we passed the first night. The people of Neumecklenburg expected to be expelled on Monday the 2. July 1945, and this actually happened.

We changed the sacks from our cart over to the hand-cart, which Wagner had made. Also Mrs. Lenz and her family were preparing for the journey. Mrs. Bohne, in whose house we had stayed the night, had a daughter about 30 years of age, who was confined to bed, and another one of about 30 years, who had not properly grown up, and who was mentally like a child of 9 years of age. It was very hard for this woman. The one, who was confined to bed, was put into a cart. The other did not help her. Her 17 year old son helped her a little, but he was very thoughtless. The little dwarf girl was lost before we reached the Oder.

In the afternoon all Neumecklenburg lined up before the church; here they had to remain standing, until the Poles and Russians had controlled all the carts. The Poles kept what they wanted. The sacks had to be opened, and soon the beds were piled up on the side of the road. Neumecklenburg was a fairly large place, so that the column was long. We remained right at the end of the column. The horse and cart was the first thing, that they took from us, but this we had expected. I had a bed quite openly on the hand-cart, and my twins Ulrich and Brigitte, who were $2^1/_2$ years old, were sitting on it.

When the control came to my cart, they asked about beds, and I replied: "This bed is for my 2 children." Strange to say, they left me the bed, and did not control the sacks. Perhaps they acted so, because of the 2 children sitting on the bed, or perhaps they had already taken enough.

Finally the column moved off. A Russian accompanied us on a cycle as far as the Oder, and some Poles went with us to the next place, but only in order to make certain, that none of the plundered Germans remained behind. The 2. July 1945 was an overclouded, rainy day. Wolfgang and I went in front of the shaft of the cart, Else and Hilde Mittag pushed behind, Rosemarie, who was still ill, held on to the cart. Annelore went behind the cart of Mrs. Lenz, where Wagner was at the shaft, and my 2 little children sat on top, and were unconscious of what was happening. We went to Gurkow, by way of Steinhöfel. The people stood on the sides of the streets, and watched us as we went past. "Tomorrow we have to go." We passed the first night in a farm house, which had been left by its owners.

The next day we went further on a bad, sandy road, which in parts went uphill. The inhabitants of Steinhöfel and Gurkow had to join and follow us. A little further than Gurkow we had to stop for about an hour, as herds of cattle were driven past us. Our column had become enormously long: There were small and little hand-carts, in between wheel-barrows, on which people had the goods, which they were allowed to take away with them.

At 11 o'clock in the morning we went further. Between Zechow and Zantoch we had to stop from 13 o'clock until 17.30 o'clock. To our left hand was the river Warthe, and on our right hand the railway embankment, which at this point was hidden from our view by a thick hedge of thorns. We had during these days been living from what we had brought with us. I had 14 loaves with me and some coarse grain. This had been sufficient for 13 people, until we reached Fürstenwalde on the Spree. Here we met some acquaintances, Rosemarie went with the son of an acquaintance to get a can of water, and while they were away there came the order to start again. Every cart began to move, and we must not remain halting, or else we would have been in the way of all those, who were behind us. I ran back and cried out loudly. The boy came back, but I was not able to see Rosemarie. I ran as far as the little farm, where she was to get the water. Then I ran back behind the column, and when I reached our cart she was back there, thank God. She had run along the embankment behind the hedge of the thorns. I mention this incident, only in order to show how easy it was for children to get separated from their parents. Indeed, many children got left behind. Anyone who lost a child in this confusion was lucky, if he found it again. For the future, Rosemarie had to hold on to our cart.

It was 6.30 in the evening, when we had to go on. We went at an increased speed, as far as Landsberg on the Warthe. Our column had to pass through the town, and I do not know how many thousand carts there were. Russians and Poles were standing at the sides of the streets. Some looked serious, others jeered and laughed at us. At one spot I saw a painted up girl, who was clapping the covers of tins together. We had to pass right through Landsberg, until we got to the street to Küstrin. At 10.30 in the evening we were at last allowed to halt, as it was already dark. We were dead tired, for we had done on that day 22 kilometres with the hand-cart. Here we passed our first night in the open. We took sacks from the cart, and, having placed them against the wall of a house, sat on them.

I will not fail to mention a humane action, which we experienced here. A Polish girl came, and asked who had little children, and then indicated to us that the children could sleep with her in the house. Mrs. Lenz went with her along with Annelore, my two little children and her own children; she had a 4 year old boy and a girl of eight. The Polish girl showed her into a dwelling, which had been left by German occupants the day before. Mr. Wagner, Wolfgang and I remained sitting on the sacks. There was a fine drizzling rain, and we covered ourselves in our cloaks and rugs, but none of us slept properly. "We must see, that we can cook ourselves something warm to eat," said Mr. Wagner. He went and gathered some stones, and placed them in the form of a square open on one side. Then he fetched wood, and we had a chopper and cooking pots. Mr. Wagner then made a fire between the stones, and water was found. Thus we cooked for the first time ersatz coffee, which we had brought with us. Others did the same as we had done, and for the future we had to help ourselves in this primitive way.

Then the children joined us, and we ate bread and drank coffee. Not everyone had so much to eat as we did. Many fetched cold potatoes, which had been cooked in their skins, and ate them for their breakfast. During our march we were not provided with food. Everyone had to do his best for himself. We had glass jars of meat and sausage with us, and also sausage, fat and bread. Our Frenchman had always said, when we already thought of fleeing in January, that the chief thing we should provide for in this case was food. I noted this, and I must say that he was right.

At about 8 o'clock we started again. Beyond Landsberg the misery of the highway began. On the pavement was the first dead person, it was a woman, who was blue in the face, and whose body was all swollen. We then went on. The sun appeared between the clouds, and it became quite warm. It was a distance of 15 kilometres to the next large village, which was named Dühringsberg and was beyond Landsberg. There we made a quite short halt, and I gave my dog, which had followed me from home, to a Pole. It was really wicked of me to reward his faitfulness in this way, but I got milk for my children, and they had not had any for days. Also I thought, that I would not always have something to eat for my dog. Brigitte had got ill with a bad diarrhoea, but I had no idea, that it was the beginning of dysentery.

We went further, and this night we spent in a hay-loft, in which there was no hay. We had already, like many other of our comrades, cooked our food on stoves which we had put together, outside in the yard. We found potatoes in the fields.

Most of the people of the trek lived solely from what they found in the fields or ate unripe fruit on the side of the road. We had very little bread. The result was, that many people got ill. Small children under one year of age almost all died on the trek. There was no milk, and even if the mothers made them a thick meal soup, the journey was too long for them. Then the changes in the weather, first a scorching sun, and then showers of cold rain, which were fatal. Every day we got a bit further, sometimes we did 9 kilometres, on one day perhaps only three, then 20 or more. Huge herds of cattle were driven past us, some to the east, and some to the west. We did not understand this confusion. But the explanation was, that the Russians drove the good cattle to the east, and that which was not so good to the west, for feeding their army.

We went on along the dusty road. To the right and to the left was forest, and out of the forest came „the breath of the plague". The dead bodies of animals and human beings, lay around and were scarcely covered. Also the corpses of the human beings were only covered with a little earth, so that one could see the head and the feet. Huge swarms of blue-bottles were on these corpses, and they came and settled on our limbs, wherever there was the smallest scratch. But even a very little scratch festered and discharged. It took me a quarter of a year to get little scratches to heal.

Sometimes we found smashed up guns, anti-panzer bombs and broken-down carts lying around, and over all this, the hot sun of June burnt mercilessly. In addition to hunger we suffered thirst. For hours we often did not come to a village, and, therefore, had no water. When one did come to a village or to a little farm left by its occupants, everyone rushed ravenously to the water, and drank into his body the germs of disease. As far as possible, we avoided drinking water. When there was a short pause, we boiled thin coffee, and took it with us in a milkcan. But I was not always able to prevent the children from drinking water, and Annelore got diarrhoea.

I shall never forget one picture. Whenever I looked behind me, then I saw the tanned face of my little son Ulrich laughing at me. His little sister, who was plagued with illness and hardship, had scratched his face, and it was full of little scars. All the same he laughed with his dimpled cheeks, and the warm wind blew his fair hair over his tanned forehead. Never before and never afterwards was Ulrich so tanned as on this trek, but Brigitte sat beside him, pale with sunken eyes and got thinner from day to day. When I happened to see a mound at the side of the road, I then clenched my teeth.

Forward, only forward! We must get away from the highway, and reach Berlin as soon as possible. There I had relatives and acquaintances, who would help me. There I could bring the child to a doctor, who would prescribe for it, and get it healthy again.

And what happened to many who starved and who had to live from the sparse products of the fields on the way. Typhus and dysentery spread more and more. Many died on the way. I often saw people lying at the side of the highway, blue in the face, and struggling for breath, and others who had collapsed from fatigue, and never got onto their feet again. Often I also saw corpses. Many also went where they were directed to go and died there. My brother Albert Klatt of Netzbruch died on the 22. November 1945 in a village in Uckermark, his wife Luise Klatt, maiden name Beuten, died on the 1. December 1945. Both of them died of typhus. Many others died in the same way as my brother and his wife. I no longer know all their names, but it is certainly a quarter of each parish.

We went on, an endless column of misery, such as had never before been experienced, or ever dreamt of. We passed the nights in bombed out houses, or in barns or in the open air. The houses and barns were full of filth, and it was best to remain in the open. Often a parish on the trek had to stop, and bury the dead on the side of the road.

The names of all the places we passed through, I no longer remember, but two places I have not forgotten, Balz and Tamsel. These were the last two places, before Küstrin. In Balz there were many Polish soldiers; they told our trek to remain for the night in barns and stables. We were to pass the night in a stable, but Wagner said: „No, we are not going to do that". And as the people were willing to do so, we turned into a side street. We went a short distance along this street, and behind a bend in the road we found a destroyed house, which had recently been built of which the small stable building had remained intact. Here we found even a laundry and two pigsties, in which were potatoes. In the laundry were tins of preserved spinach, carrots, etc. There was also a great quantity of ersatz coffee. We were very happy at finding all this, and learned that it had been left behind by Italians who had been there.

Else and Hilde Mittag were not satisfied with these quarters, and they particularly resented the fact, that the Russian Headquarters were on the other side of the road. We did not have to wait long, before some Russians came over and fetched water. We anticipated the worst, but Wagner spoke with them in their own language, pretended to be a Czech, and said we were his sisters. The Russians then gave us bread and sugar, and went away again. There was a proper stove in the laundry. We found wood, and cooked a large pot of nice wholesome food, into which we put a jar of meat. It tasted splendid and we took up our quarters for the night there, and slept well. The next morning we warmed up the food, and made a pot of coffee. Then we made sandwiches, so that we could give the children something, when they were hungry. My 14 loaves had not yet been all eaten, but had got fairly hard. We still had fat and sausage, and, therefore, had also the strenght to bear these great hardships.

After breakfast we got our cart ready, and proceeded to the street. There was great excitement there, as 3 people had been murdered in the night, and several others injured. One of those murdered was the mother of 3 children, of whom the eldest was a girl of sixteen. This had happened in the barn, in which we were to pass the night; Polish soldiers had come into the barn during the night, and by the light of lanterns had taken, what they thought valuable, from the last belongings of the expellees. Anyone, who tried to defend his goods and chattels, was shot. At the end they shot recklessly at everyone, who even got up. We had by chance or by fate escaped this lot. On the highway we met many acquaintances from the parish of Eichwerder, in which my father-in-law and my mother-in-law had lived. There were also people from Friedbergschbruch there. We then started off in the direction of Tamsel.

Tamsel was about 3 kilometres away from Balz, and was the last large village before the Oder, and Küstrin. At about 11 o'clock in the forenoon we reached Tamsel. Here we were destined to suffer horrible and terrible things. Had we not already had enough? We always had to suffer more, and bear new burdens. Must all Germans suffer so much, simply because they were Germans?

We had to pass through a lane of Polish soldiers, and people were taken out of the column. These had to drop out, and go to the farms on the highway with their carts, and all that they had with them. No-one knew what this meant, but everyone expected something bad. The people refused to obey. Often it was single individuals, particularly young girls, who were kept back. The mothers clung to the girls and wept. Then the soldiers tried to drag them away by force and, as this did not succeed, they began to strike the poor terrified people with rifle-butts and riding whips. One could hear the screams of those who were whipped, far away. I shall never forget it in my life.

Polish soldiers also came to us with riding whips in their hands. With flushed faces, they ordered us to get out of the column, and to go to the farms. Else and Hilde Mittag began to weep. I said: "Come, it is no use resisting. They will beat us to death. We will try to escape afterwards". Russians were standing there looking on cynically. In our desperation we begged them for help. They shrugged their shoulders and indicated to us, that the Poles were the masters. Just as everything already seemed to be hopeless, I saw a senior Polish officer. I pointed to my 3 children, and asked what I could do, as I had 3 children. I can no longer remember all that I said in my desperation, but he answered: „Go to the highway".

We got hold of our cart and got away, as quickly as we could. The trek carts were getting congested, although up to then we had been going in an orderly row. Three or four rows now stopped beside one another. From the other direction came large trucks driven by Russians. They ruthlessly forced their way through us. We tried to go forward, and succeeded in getting into the second row. Then we were again stopped, and a terrible scene was enacted before our eyes, and touched us most deeply. Four Polish soldiers tried to separate a young girl from her parents, who clung in desperation to her. The Poles struck the parents with their rifle-butts, particularly the man. He staggered, and they pushed him across the road down the embankment. He fell down, and one of the Poles took his machine pistol, and fired a series of shots. For a moment there was a deathly silence, and then the screams of the 2 women pierced the air. They rushed to the dying man, and the four Poles disappeared in the forest. When we finally went on, the desperate weeping of the 2 women echoed behind us, mingled with the screams of the people, who were being beaten in the village of Tamsel.

This occurred a short distance outside Tamsel in the direction of Küstrin. Else and Hilde Mittag saw it and also many others saw it, whose namens I do not know.

In the midst of all this confusion we had got separated from the cart of Mrs. Lenz and of Wagner. And the worst for me was, that Annelore was with the other cart. Where were they? Had they also been kept back in Tamsel? Or had they gone on? After half an hour of tormenting uncertainty, we finally saw the cart on the side of the road. Some Poles were trying to take Wagner's boots off. He, however, did not put up with this, and explained to them that he was a Czech. Then they left him in peace. Annelore had been very frightened because of us, and was crying. Yes, she still could cry, but we had no more tears to shed.

Thus we made the acquaintance of death in various forms. It threatened us in the stink coming from decaying carcasses, in unclean water and in the form of robbing and murdering bandits. Now that we were together again, there was only one thing for us to do, and that was to go forward, to cross the Oder at any price. We saw more dead people at the side of the road, also Gottschimmerbruch had to bury one. We kept pushing forward, as hard as we could to Küstrin.

In the afternoon of a day, which may have been the 6. July 1945, towards 16.30 o'clock we saw Küstrin in front of us. On the outskirts of the town were some small houses, which seemed to be inhabited, but in the streets were only ruins. The town of Küstrin had been completely destroyed, no-one was living there, at least not in the part which was to the east of the Oder. The other part of Küstrin I did not see. We moved in a long column through the streets in the midst of these ruins, and over us hovered a smell of burning and decay. I still remember this smell today, after a period of 5 years. The streets were often blocked by ruins, or pools of water were in them.

At last we reached the bridge over the Oder at 17.30. We were ready to give everything, which we still possessed, if we could only pass over the Oder. For on the other side were Germans, who would help and understand us. Our one object was to get away from these robbers and murderers, for we had not forgotten the terror of Tamsel. Polish soldiers stood before the Oder, and every cart was again controlled. When there were still only 6—8 carts in front of us, the barrier was closed, and that was the end for that day. What was now to happen? Our disappointment was boundless, for we were just before our goal, and were not allowed to pass through. Where were we to remain? It was not possible to stay in Küstrin, or sleep in the ruins. Then came the order to go further in the direction of Frankfurt on the Oder. What did that mean? Was the terror of Tamsel to be repeated, or did they intend to put us into the concentration camp in Sonnenburg? We were defenseless, for there were practically only women, children and very old men in our column.

We, therefore, had to go past the fortifications, which had been partly blown up, to the street along them. At the end of this hot day, the sky began to be covered with dark clouds, in the distance we could hear thunder. We went forward, one cart after the other, small ones and bigger ones, and in between wheel-barrows. How many there were, I do not know, for it was impossible to see to the end of the column; there were certainly thousands. Brigitte was crying, Rosemarie was staggering from fatigue, but we had to continue to go on. There was still neither house nor village in sight. The number of clouds increased, and the thunder came nearer. The trucks of the Russians drove close past us on the narrow road. When the first wind swept over us, I went to my 2 little children, and covered them with a rug and a jacket lined with fur. They lay down, and I muffled them up as far as I could.

We put our coats on, and then the rain came down. There were violent peals of thunder and flashes of lightening. We could not go further, and stopped on the edge of the road, and sought shelter behind the cart. The 2 small children had gone to sleep. The jacket was full of rain, but the fur inside kept the damp out. They both remained dry and warm, and slept the whole night, but on the edge of the road we were drenched through and through, and very cold. I was sorry for my poor Rosemarie, who was only just 7 years of age, and was ill when she started from home. What would be the end of this? The children would become ill.

It was impossible for us to sit on the wet ground, and it was a terrible night. Our thoughts wandered back to a place, where there were meadows and fields and a house, which was dry and warm with soft beds, and which had been our home. We had been driven out, and were chased about, wandering along strange roads, without aim or hope, defenselss to every kind of danger. Only because foreign masters, who had conquered us, had made an agreement, according to which Poles and Russians were empowered to hunt millions of Germans out of their homes into the streets, while the crops had not been harvested, the fields were uncultivated, and the towns deserted.

When dawn came we started again. Our cart was heavier, because everything was wet. The rain of the storm had developed into a continual rain. A few kilometres further was a small farm on the road. We decided to stop here to dry our wet clothes, and to prepare a hot meal. The farm was a single one standing alone, and in the yard were great numbers of hand-carts side by side. At different parts primitive fires were burning. I went into the house, which was full of people from the loft to the cellar. As soon as there was room on a plank bed, I put my little children on it, and took their wet clothes off. We were all dead tired, and the children quickly went to sleep, where we had prepared places for them from rugs. We remained until noon, then the sun came out, and we were able to dry our wet things.

Here I again met Anni Liefke, Hanna Blankenstein, old father Liefke and different other acquaintances. They had all had the same experiences in Tamsel. They thought, that the Poles would use the Germans, who were detained there, for working on the farms in the locality. We learned later on, that this was actually done. Families were ruthlessly torn asunder there, and the individuals among them, who were capable of work, were taken away. Father Liefke said: 'My God, my God, this is a bitter life. I am more than 70 years old. When mother died, I thought: that is hard. Then Hermann and Arthur were killed in the war, and I thought: that is still harder. Then the Russians came, and robbed us of everything, and then I thought: that is the hardest blow of all; but what we are now suffering, is the hardest, and I shall not survive it for long. If it were not for Anni and the 2 little children, I should kill myself'.

We made a hot meal consisting of a crushed grain soup, into which we put a jar of meat. It was warm and nourishing, and we again got courage. We heard from the others, that Göritz was about 3 kilometres from here, with a bridge over the Oder, where we could cross the river. We, therefore, started, and reached Göritz during the afternoon. There was a long row of trek-carts before us. We drew up in our place, and after several hours we were on the bridge. Some Polish soldiers stood there, and we were in great fear, because the horrible picture of Tamsel was still before our eyes; however, the Poles here were quite decent. The control was superficial, and nothing was taken away from us.

Now we thought, that the worst was past, but at the other end of the bridge, there were Russian soldiers with their green caps, and also girls in uniform. We were again controlled, all our sacks were opened, and turned upside down. Many lost the few valuables, which they still possessed. From me they took my wedding ring, which I foolishly had on my finger. Then we had to collect the sacks together, and were forced with blows to leave the Oder bridge as quickly as possible. They drove us without mercy down the steap enbankment, and it was very difficult for us to hold the carts.

It had now become evening, and we were dead tired. The next larger village was 7 kilometres away, and was called Reitwein. There were a few separate farms not so far away, but they were overfilled with expellees, and we had no choice but to pass the night on the meadow. Here we fixed up quarters as far as possible. Wagner made a fire. We brought the 2 carts together, took the beds out of the sacks, placed them under and between the carts with the covers and coats underneath on the ground, and so made beds for the children, and also for the grown-ups. Wagner said, he would keep awake, and we slept, as we were dead tired.

At 4 o'clock in the morning we were woken up again, as we had to be off the meadow by 5 o'clock. Wagner had already got fire going, and we made coffee and ate bread. He told us, that the Russians had been doing a lot of plundering during the night. Many, who had succeeded in keeping their watches and boots, had now been relieved of them.

When we left the meadow at 5 o'clock in the morning, 5 old people remained sitting. No-one knew, to whom they belonged, they could not walk, and remained indifferently and listlessly where they were. An old woman, whom I had seen sitting there the evening before, was still sitting there in the same position. She kept saying: "Do give me a little coffee". She was given some coffee, but no-one could take her with them, as everyone had a load of his own to bear, which was heavy enough.

There had been fine rain during the night, and the roads were muddy and slipperly. Then we came to a spot, where it was muddy up to the knees. The carts sank in the mud up to the axles, and it was very hard to move them. First we had to leave one cart behind, and with all our combined exertions get the other out of the morass, and get it afterwards. The condition of the road was like this for several hundred metres, and when we were through, we were completely exhausted.

After a short rest we went on. The road continued to be very bad, and it was still very difficult for us to make progress. There were 2 roads to Reitwein, and I think we had taken the worse of the two. A row of carts took the other road. We saw, that a column of Poles with horses and carts were approaching these people from the west and plundered them again.

Towards 2 o'clock in the afternoon we reached Reitwein. We could not go any further, for we were exhausted, after 2 nights without sleep, after the terror we had passed through, and the bad road. But we had another trial to pass through, and that was the reception in the German localities.

A few men, assigned by the parish, made it clear to us in a fairly ruthless manner that we had to go on. We, however, were not intimidated, as we could not go ahead. We took our wet things out of the sacks, and lay them in the sun to dry, particularly the rugs and beds, for everything was twice its usual weight, as a result of being wet through. We lay down in the warm sun on a small meadow, which smelt strongly of camomile. My poor little Brigitte and little Ulrich were glad to get out of the trek-cart, and to stretch their legs; Brigitte was hardly able to do this, as she was already very exhausted, but Ulrich ran about delighted. The children had no idea of what this tramp meant for us, that we had become homeless, and were a crowd of people without connections, who were looked on askance by all Germans in the *Reich.*

The next day we went further through villages, which had been shot to pieces, and passed fields, which had been totally ruined by the war. Everywhere we saw the traces of war, but there were no more corpses lying at the sides of the road. Instead of that we saw graves with simple crosses of wood, and we knew that German soldiers were buried there. But even here carcasses of animals were still lying around in the woods and in the fields. The villages were partly destroyed, for instance Golzow, and also others. But there were always some inhabitants in the villages, even if they had to dwell in half-destroyed houses. There were also bakeries here and there, which were still running. Some of our people remained in the Oderbruch, and settled down there. We did not get any food here, but were able to exchange our crushed grain for bread.

The authoress then reports on how she succeeded in reaching Berlin with her children, who were dangerously ill. She ends with a description of her wretched existence as refugee in Berlin and Mecklenburg, and of her journey into the British zone in March 1946, where she found her husband again.

No. 295

Eyewitness report of Mrs. Isabella von Eck, of the Manor of Birkholz, district of Züllichau-Schwiebus in Brandenburg
Photo copy. 22. May 1951. 5 pages.
Printed in part.

Expulsions of the Germans in June 1945, 3 days' tramp to Frankfurt on the Oder, and conditions in the town, which was crowded with expellees

In the first pages of her report the authoress states, that being 75 years of age she did not join the flight because of the cold, and as owner of a manor had to suffer very much, owing to the excesses of the Russians.

In the spring Poles came as police into our village, under the command of the Russian commandant. They came in rags, and wore the uniforms of the Volunteer Fire Brigade, which they had found in Birkholz. These people stole and took away everything they found, even the carpets from the Catholic church. The inhabitants, who were not deported, had to work from 6 o'clock in the morning until 8 o'clock in the evening in the fields, with an hour's pause. There was not rest on Sundays, and also not at Easter and Whitsuntide. As wages they received some bread.

On the 25. June our lot was changed. At 5 o'clock in the morning we were awakened: all Germans had to be ready to depart in half an hour, and must line up in the village street. In the greatest haste everyone collected, what he could carry. When the Germans had left their houses, the Russians and Poles immediately began to plunder all that they could find. Then we received the order to deliver up articles of gold and valuables. We were driven separately into a yard, where our baggage was searched, and everything taken from us, which the soldiers liked. As I was 75 years of age, I was put onto a farm-cart with 2 dying women and 2 girls of 10 and 12 years of age, who had venereal diseases, all of whom could not walk. Just in front of the yard a Polish officer beat me with a heavy riding whip, until I took my fur off. Then a soldier sprang onto the cart, and tore open my clothes as far as my chemise; he found my purse with jewelery, and took it for himself. The German paper money he threw at my feet. Very many men and women were thrashed in the course of the search, until they bled; their faces were covered with stripes, and their eyes full of blood.

At 1 o'clock in the afternoon the wretched column moved off to the west, accompanied by Polish soldiers. Apart from us and 2 carts with infants and old people, all had to walk. Wherever we looked on the road, the same wretched columns were to be seen, wheel-barrows were pushed by women, loaded with luggage and small children, aged and sick people sat in cases with wheels. On the way they took the sacks away from us, and threw them into carts, which were coming from the opposite direction, and were going to the east. The tramp to Frankfurt on the Oder lasted 3 days and 2 nights, and we passed through destroyed, ghastly and empty towns and villages, such as Sternberg, Bottschow and Reppen, which had been left by their inhabitants, before we came. We slept in the woods, and as the Poles had taken away from us our last rugs and cloaks in our village, we had nothing to cover ourselves up with. Anyone, who died in the night, was buried early in the morning in the woods, and it was often not certain, that such people were dead. For one only waited, until they had not moved for a short time. The Polish sentries robbed us during the last night of almost the very last rag, which we possessed. As an explanation they pretended, that these were Russian attacks.

When we arrived at the Oder bridge in Frankfurt, we were left to our fate, and the Poles went back to the east. We dragged our sacks across the bridge, and came into the overcrowded town. Hundreds of thousands of refugees had already arrived, and new treks kept pouring into the streets. The town was powerless against this influx, and no quarters and no bread were provided, for these helpless people who had to remain in the streets, without a roof over their heads. When we arrived, there were still carts and cases at the Oder bridge. We heard that, shortly before our arrival there, about 70 families of the trek had put an end to their lives, by throwing themselves into the Oder, for these farmers could not understand why they had lost their farms, and committed suicide in desperation.

We remained 4 nights in the tunnels underneath the main railway station, and Miss Sowa made us a place to lie upon, by putting her sacks on a cart. We were waiting to be able to get into one of the overcrowded coal wagons of the trains going to Berlin. These trains were, however, stormed by thousands, and it was impossible for us to get in.

We had nothing more to eat, and as Miss Sowa had sold her last dress at the railway station to a Russian soldier for a loaf, we decided to proceed by foot. We found an old cart without an owner, and loaded our baggage into it; we then went with some Birkholz farmers westward in the direction of Berlin. Mrs. and Miss Sowa dragged the cart, and I walked behind. We did 15–20 kilometres a day, but were in constant fear of being attacked by Russians, who suddenly appeared everywhere. At night we slept in the woods or in deserted barns, and gathered carrots and potatoes in the fields. Sometimes we got something to eat from people, who were sorry for us, or allowed us to cook our potatoes in their houses. Otherwise we made a fire on the way between a few stones.

After a few days our farmer friends remained in the villages on the way, and we continued to go on. I wanted to get with Mrs. and Miss Sowa to relatives of mine in my home, which was Elberfeld, as my nearest relatives were, like myself, all on the flight from Upper Silesia.

The authoress now describes her adventurous journey as far as the zone frontier.

No. 296

Eyewitness report of Mrs N. N. of Sorau in Brandenburg
Original 5. July 1952. 9 pages.
Printed in part.

Expulsion by the Poles in June 1945, miserable march across the Neisse to Cottbus

First the authoress reports about the arrest and deportation of her husband and the death of her daughter. She then summarizes her impressions of the Russians, and continues:

On the 23. June 1945 we were completely surprised by Polish orders to leave our homes within 10 minutes. I was then again living in my house, for things changed from moment to moment, one was thrown out, then one dared to go back again to one's house and to clear out the worst dirt, to be thrown out again. None of us had expected to be expelled, though a week before Polish civilians had come and told us that we should now come under Polish administration. The Polish civilians behaved more decently, although they did some plundering, of what the Russians had left. There were, however, scarcely any rapings. Then in the forenoon of the 23. June 1945 Polish soldiery, the so-called Lublin troops appeared, and on the same day expelled the whole population of Sorau, about 29 000 people. Only a few were allowed to remain, working in factories for the Russians.

I was only allowed 10 minutes, and was just able to drag my grandchild, who was 1 year old, down the stairs, to fetch the parambulator secretely, the contents of which had already been partly stolen, and some concealed food for the child. When I wanted to fetch my cloak out of my house, the Poles did not let me in again remarking, that the 10 minutes were passed. A Polish girl took my shoes from my feet, which I had kept on when sleeping for weeks, in order that the Russians should not take them from me. She gave me a pair of old tennis shoes of my son, which were 4 seizes too big. My hair was hanging down and dishevelled, as the Russians had taken all my hair-clips and combs, and there were no hair-pins in the whole of Sorau. Also the men all had long beards, as shaving kits were an article, which was very coveted by the Russians. In an old knitted jacket of my husband and a very old skirt, which the Russians had left me, and with the tennis shoes on my feet, I began my tramp along the highway.

It was a miserable column of people, and for 3 months the expellees of Silesia and East Brandenburg tramped in this way along the highways: one saw parambulators, farm-carts, wheel-barrows, small parambulators, and the most inconceivable sorts of vehicles. From 4 o'clock in the morning until 7 o'clock in the evening it was possible to be on the highways, then we slept either in the woods, in dirty barns and empty houses, but even there the Poles did not leave us in peace. We moved slowly as poor as beggars, for the Russians had long since robbed us of our money, of our documents, of our savings bank-books and, of course, also of our jewelery, our watches, our wedding rings, etc.

I have often been asked in the west, why I did not hide my jewelery better, for instance in seams of my skirt, in my hair, etc. When I replied, that I was 6 times searched in my vagina for jewelery, these people were utterly astounded.

When we had got across the Neisse, where we were again thoroughly searched by Poles for jewelery and valuables and came to Kottbus, we hoped that now some authorities would look after us. I would here add, that the gold crowns were in the course of the search by the Poles knocked out of the mouth of my friend Mrs. Müller of Sorau, who was the wife of a district judge. Also our hopes of being looked after were not realized, for we were given no food coupons, and now we began to famish. It was at the time technically impossible to feed the mass of the expellees, as for at least 3 months 2 000 expellees came every day through Kottbus, and enormous crowds began to congest there.

Anyone, who had no definite goal, remained here hoping to be soon able to go back to his home. Very few of us had any money, and there was no possibility of getting work, so that one went into the villages, and begged for a few potatoes, cucumbers or carrots. Kottbus became a town of horror and death. I myself witnessed how 3 intimate acquaintances of mine died of hunger before my eyes. I had better luck, and succeeded in getting a miserable garret, where I was able to rest a few days with my grandchild. Then I wanted to go further, I did not know where, and had no goal, as all my relatives were in Silesia or in Sorau.

In spite of the time with the Russians, my grandchild had survived everything well, particularly so, as my daughter had fed him at her breast until she died, also the trek on the highway, and he looked healthy and tanned. But on the 2. day in Kottbus he began to get ill, and after 6 weeks of suffering the little child died of typhus on the 8. August 1945. Now I was quite alone in a strange town; in the course of a quarter of a year, I had lost 3 of those, who were dearest to me, was without money, abandoned and homeless.

The authoress now describes how she found her son. The end of her report consists in the description of the fate of some of her acquaintances.

No. 303

Eyewitness report of the farmer Johann Brendel of Krummöls,
district of Löwenberg in Lower Silesia
Original. 12. January 1953, 7 pages.
Printed in part.

First expulsion across the Neisse at the end of June 1945 and voluntary return; incidents in connection with the expulsion in July 1946

At the beginning the author observes, that the villagers after their return in the middle of May 1945, soon began their normal work again at home and in the fields, without being molested much by Russians troops.

To our regret, more and more Poles kept coming into the village. At first they were somewhat reserved. The Russians put them onto different farms, which we did not regard as very serious, as we were occupied territory, and had lost the war. We soon, however, had to learn, that we were wrong. Wireless sets and bicycles were stolen, and all villagers had to wear white bands round their arms. We were completely cut off from the outside world.

During the hay harvest in June 1945 we received the order at 10 o'clock in the morning one Sunday, that all the villagers had to prepare to go away with 30 kilogrammes of luggage. When we made protests at the Russian Hedquarters, the Russians shrugged their shoulders and said, that they had no order to forbid the Poles from driving us out. Punctually at 2 o'clock drunken Poles began to drive the people out of the upper part of the village. Those, who did not get out of the houses quickly enough, were hastened up, by being lashed with whips and beaten with sticks.

At the exit of the village there was a general halt. There we were first relieved of earrings, finger rings, watches and purses. Then we went, accompanied by shots with carbines and machine pistols, as quickly as we could possibly go, to the next village, which had already been evacuated. After having spent three nights on the way, we arrived at the outskirts of Görlitz; here we were received by a big plundering commando. We had taken the aged and sick with us on horses and carts, and had also taken oxen and cows with us. Here all the carts and harnessed animals were taken away from us, and we crossed the Neisse to Görlitz with what we could carry in our hands or in parambulators. Everyone had to rely on himself, and to seek quarters when it began to rain.

The town was already crowded with people, who had been driven out. After having put up three times in emergency billets, I moved with some families to a place, 20 kilometres further on than Görlitz, where we found quarters in a small inn.

After a few weeks we heard, that some villagers, chiefly young people, had crossed the Neisse at night, and succeeded in reaching Krummöls. We now decided to go back ourselves. After having overcome different obstacles and having been plundered, we arrived home. Of course, our property had got much smaller during our absence owing to treks, who had passed through, Poles and Russians. It was fortunate, that not all the villagers had been driven out; some of them had been in the fields, or were on the remote farms. Thus, during our absence the cattle had been looked after, as far as was possible in this emergency.

We had made a great mistake, in thinking that the after effects of the lost war were at an end, for now we had to pass through hell with all the terrors associated with it.

The Russians had only a small unit in the village, which was responsible for the gathering in of the harvest, and the delivering up of the agricultural products. The Pole now played the master and owner. There were farmer families, who would have starved to death, if they had not been helped with victuals by neighbours. The Poles now set up their own militia. On every farm there was a family of Poles or a discharged soldier. Some of them were indeed reasonable, but they were compelled by the criminal elements to take part in every disgraceful act.

The author then reports in detail about a series of excesses, and also about the regime of terrorisation on the part of the Polish militia, until the summer of 1946.

At last, in July 1946, shortly before the harvest, our day of redemption came. About 450 inhabitants, half of the population of the village received an order at 8 o'clock in the evening to line up in the morning at 7 o'clock with 30 kilogrammes of baggage in the schoolyard. During the whole night Poles were careful that no-one took leave of his neighbour. We were all again registered. Some families, who were recommended by a Pole they knew, were allowed to go home again. In place of these, others were fetched out of their houses, and went away with the transport. The Poles checked our baggage again, and stole everything they liked, unless one could buy them off by paying them enough Reichsmarks. Most of the people had perambulators, hand-carts and wheel- barrows with them, for they had a 20 kilometre tramp before them, further than the district town of Löwenberg. At last, however, the Poles realised that this was impossible and carts drawn by horses and oxen were taken. We were, however, not allowed to go into our dwellings again, in order to take anything more with us.

The column then started off, accompanied by armed Poles, but there was, of course, plundering on the way. Towards evening we reached Plagwitz, and had to take up quarters in the previous madhouse. There were the inhabitants of many parishes there, and fresh ones kept coming. It was a great mix-up.

After a few days we were put along with the inhabitants of other parishes, into a goods train, but before departing we were again thoroughly searched. Women were searched by Polish women down to their chemises. Trucks were standing ready to take away the stolen things at once. Then we reached Kohlfurt, where we were taken over by English soldiers, and this was a great piece of luck for us. The Poles had accompanied us as far as the border of the zone, and we were indeed relieved to see the end of this pack. With short breaks in our journey we reached Wipperfürth, and there the people of our village were separated, one part came to the Lower Rhine, and another part was brought in omnibuses to Königswinter and to Honnef.

Those of our fellow villagers, who had remained behind, suffered hard times, until they also were brought away in December. They unfortunately had to remain in the east zone, but a few of them joined us on the Rhine, and went to relatives and acquaintances.

No. 307

Report of the clergyman N. N. of Leobschütz in Upper Silesia
Printed in the „Leobschützer Heimatbrief" 1950.
(Home Letter of Leobschütz — a publication of the inhabitants of this place, who are in West Germany)

The driving-out of all men unfit for work, and of women having children from Leobschütz (September 1945)

The roundup of the Germans began early at 5 o'clock in the morning on the 26. September 1945. The Polish militia came into the houses, and hunted all the Germans into the street. The fewest of them had time and opportunity to take any of their belongings with them. They were driven together to the place called, "The Ring", and were taken from there partly in trucks, and partly on foot into the camp at Marschke and Zilger. The population of Schlegenburg had already been six weeks in this camp. The whole night the men had to remain uncovered in the rain. The next day individuals were categorized according to their being fit or not for work by the Town Commandant and the Polish militia: women with children, young girls, women without children and men unfit for work. The order was, that women with children and aged people were to be taken to the *Reich*, and that men fit for work, women without children and young girls were to remain there to work. There were about 3 000 people closely packed together in the camp.

Those persons, who were to be taken away, were brought to the railway at about 5 o'clock in the afternoon on the 27. September 1945. Among them was the Franciscan monk Ludwig Bogdanski, the previous Superior of the monastery at Leobschütz. The precentor Borsutzki of Leobschütz was made leader of the transport. After the people had been packed like cattle, 70—80 at a time in each truck, the journey began at about 8 o'clock in the evening, and Polish militia guarded the transport.

On the 28. September the transport arrived in Neisse, and was left for 4 days on a dead-end siding. As no food had been taken with the transport, and no-one had troubled about feeding the people, they shrieked in their hunger for bread. But no-one gave it them. As soon as the trucks were opened by the Polish militia, the famishing people were allowed to get out, and they looked for turnips and potatoes in the adjacent fields. In the course of this, many of them, particularly old women, were beaten by the Polish militia with truncheons. Father Ludwig buried the first seven dead people in the walls of the fortress of Neisse. They had literally starved to death.

The journey then continued, and in the night the Polish militia came to the trucks, took the handbags away from the women, rummaged in them, and stole what they fancied; the men were robbed of all their money. There were repeated attempts made to get the women out of the trucks, and to rape them. When the train stopped on the way, where there was no station, and the militia opened the doors, the famishing people rushed out into the fields, to look for turnips and potatoes to satisfy their hunger. At every stopping place the dead were unloaded, and buried on the embankments, in entrenchments or in the fields. Just before getting to Görlitz all these people, who had been driven out of their homes, were again thoroughly plundered by the Russians and Polish militia.

The transport reached Löbau in Saxony, the first German frontier station, on the 10. October 1945, and here received the first food from the German administration. Each one received a quarter of a loaf with curd and a meal soup. The transport went further from Löbau to Zittau in Saxony, and from there to the camp in Niederoderwitz.

On the journey, which took 15 days, 88 people died of hunger and of exhaustion. Another 280 persons died, as a result of the expulsion, a few weeks later in Zittau and Niederoderwitz.

No. 317

Eyewitness report of Lilly Sternberg, the wife of the owner of an estate, of Gross Nappern, in the district of Osterode in East Prussia.
Original June 1952. 15 pages.
Printed in part.

Expulsion from Gross Nappern at the beginning of November 1945

After a detailed description of her experiences during the unsuccessful flight in January 1945, and of the following period under Russian and Polish administration in Gross Nappern, the authoress writes as follows:

One evening, when I was sitting with Mrs. Henzler at the hearth fire and knitting, there was a knock at the door. We received a shock, but it was only the Polish mayor, as always smelling of drink, with an air of importance and secrecy. He whispered confidentially to us, that in 8 days all Germans who want to, could go with a transport across the Oder. We swore to say nothing, and promised him everything. It is unimportant, that I had to sacrifice my fur. I sewed rucksacks for the children, baked and roasted bread, and tried cautiously to get the other women to do the same. I still could not believe, that redemption was near. It was good, that my hands were full with getting everything ready for the children, for there was a lack of everything, even of shoes.

We lived in a feverish and almost insupportable tension. At last the order came for the 28. October 1945, but on the 27. October 1945, there was a counterorder and postponement for the 30. October 1945. Unfortunately at this very moment Ingrid had an attack of vomiting and diarrhoea. On the 30. October 1945 we lined up at 4 o'clock in the morning, without having slept. I sewed a ticket on all the children with their names and destination. My rucksack was as heavy as lead, owing to the food in it. The moon was waning, the sky was clear, and it was not too cold. I found a four-leaved clover on the wall of the house, and took it with me as a good omen for the journey, which was to decide our fate, also as a last greeting from our lost home.

At 5 o'clock in the morning we assembled at the exit of the village in the direction of Peterswalde. We did not start until 9 o'clock. It was 3 kilometres to Peterswalde. In front of the Troykeschen House, where the Polish mayor lived, all had to step out of the column and remain there, whose names ended in — ski, for instance, Wischnewski, Kaminski, Lipowski, Sontowski, Kruschinski, Jedamski, Salewski, Fallinowski, also Blaskowitz and Sierokka. There was many a good German among them, and one saw no faces enthusiastic over this initial Polish race policy. There were very obvious "exceptions" made, for instance, aged and weak "Poles because of their names" were sent away, and young Germans fit for working were kept in their place. But Hopp, Kronberg, Krause, Ehmke, Münz, Perk, and we received the certificate to go.

Scarcely had we this certificate in our hands, when our journey of suffering began, accompanied by strokes with the whip from real Poles. It was shocking, when we again met Mrs. Ella B., Aunt Ella and Uncle Hans from Steffenswalde. We went from one registration and checking to another, which consisted chiefly in our having to strip ourselves, and many of us being plundered down to our shirts. This time we made the acquaintance of Polish soldiery. We passed a shocking night in the warehouse of Korn and Spudlich in Osterode. We heard nothing but shrieking, crying and groaning. Next morning at 7 o'clock we went throught our "last" control, and came through it "enlightened". We rushed like hunted game to the goods station, and suffered unspeakable fear, until the train actually moved off at 7 o'clock in the evening.

In Deutsch-Eylau Russians took away from me my emergency candle and matches, and her mantel from Mrs. Henzler. Then Poles shouted out at us, "Shoot them". A Polish woman, who was with us, said: "There are too many children." Outside we heard people madly shouting and crying for help. Our hearts palpitated wildly, and then almost stopped beating. Alone our lips moved in prayer. Then we went further to Thorn, Bromberg and Schneidemühl. There we remained 2 days, and I was able to get some emergency rations. In Landsberg on the Warthe we were again 2 days. We reached Küstrin in the afternoon of the 6. November. Here there must have been very heavy fighting. Opposite to us was a train. which had been 3 days there, and they were making fire between the rails. Then there was a transport with German prisoners of war, who asked for peppermint tea, as dysentery was raging amongst them. We saw how some were taken out every night, and those still living, with deep sunken eyes, presented a sight indeed worthy of pity, but we were unable to help them.

This lasted 4 days and 4 nights. Then we went slowly further on. We had to distribute the bread very carefully, and to tighten our belts. There was great lack of water, and at every stopping place a hunting and fighting for a single drop. The 5 days, which it was said the journey would take, had already become one and a half weeks, and the first dead, mostly children and aged people, were laid beside the rails. I had got to do something, for my bread was at an end, and the children were crying for hunger. I took grandfather Bentmann's signet ring, which I had sewn up in Jutta's mantel, and went sad at heart to the wagon with the Russians accompanying us.

After a long bargaining and consideration as to whether the gold was genuine, I got a 2 kilogramme packet of hard bread, which was really worth the gold. This lasted us until we got to Berlin, where we stopped at Wildpark. No-one was allowed to leave the train. I learned, that we were going further by way of Schwerin to Rostock.

It was the 12th day, and we had our first hot soup and wash; this was a blessing. The eyes of the children at once became brighter, and I could at last have the big sore on my leg bound up at the Red Cross station. Aunt Ella came to me in tears, and told me that Uncle Hans had not survided the journey, and that he was just at that moment being brought with other dead into a hut. I proposed to my poor aunt to come with us to Heidelberg, which was my destination, but it was still a long way to get there. I almost missed the train at 5 o'clock in the afternoon. There was a walk of an hour, and then the camp at Evershagen took us in.

In conclusion the authoress relates her further experiences, until she passed over the zone frontier.

No. 325

Eyewitness report of Mrs. Maria Popp of Labenz, district of Dramburg in Pomerania

Attested copy. 4. July 1949.

Driving out of the German people unfit for work out of Labenz and other places in the district of Dramburg during December 1945; plunderings during the journey to Scheune

The memorable 15. December 1945 began like all other days, and there were all kinds of rumours. We, of course, believed it when we heard, that there would be a great searching of houses during the next days, and with much plundering. On Wednesday, the 15. December ,all the Poles were concentrated into the village, and all of them had already been armed. We went on with our work, but naturally asked ourselves what this meant.

At midday the first people were driven out of our village, and were given 20 minutes to pack. The driving out continued the whole afternoon, until 8 o'clock in the evening. The last were only given a minute to leave the house, and there was no consideration shown to aged and sick people. First we were all driven into the church, and there we had to pass a night. We all asked ourselves, what was going to be done with us. On Sunday during the forenoon, it was made clear to us, that we were not going on a pleasant journey, but that we had to suffer for what the *SS* had done. We also began to feel beforehand, what was going to happen to us, and we were tormented in every possible way.

At 3 o'clock in the afternoon we were ordered to line up before the church. Then the Russians came up and selected workers from our midst. After this our column consisted mostly of sick people, aged people, cripples, women and children. It was really a helpless column, which started off, and went in farm-carts as far as the railway station in Janikow. A goods train was already waiting there for us. The people were being driven out from the whole district, and it took a whole day, before they all arrived at the station. The plundering began, before the first batch got into the train, and on Monday evening the journey began.

The worst part was not that most of the people had no food, but that the plundering on a large scale now began. Whole bands of fellows attacked every wagon, and when 2 left it 3 got in. The train kept stopping to help the plundering, , and no-one was left in peace. There were about 70—80 persons in each wagon, and each one was separately searched for valuables or money. Anyone, who was wearing good clothes, had to take them off, even shoes if the plunderers liked them. If anyone refused, he was beaten until he yielded. It is evident, that the distress of the people increased.

In this way we travelled to Scheune, and I think that everyone of us shudders, when he hears this name again. Every kind of cruelty, which it was possible to think of, was committed against us. We were all in a shocking condition, owing to hunger, cold and the great agitation. Very few of us were able to think clearly, and no-one dared to help the cripples and the dying. Many disappeared, and many were brought on a stretcher to a room, where they were again plundered by the Poles, and left there to slowly freeze to death.

We stood a day and a night on the platform, and then suddenly it was announced late in the evening, while we were seeking refuge from the cold behind a shed, that the train would start in 5 minutes. Perhaps our predicament had become known to higher authorities? The Russians now took over the train, and there was peace. The plundering stopped, and this seemed uncanny to us at first.

On Friday we arrived in Mecklenburg, and had to leave the train at Woldegk, totally exhausted. There we were given food for the first time, and were assigned to the villages from the camp.

When I today think of this expulsion, I am surprised how people found the strenght to survive it. I always see the cripples before my eyes, when I think of it. The crutches were snatched out of their hands, and one of them was literally kicked to death. I shall never forget his screams in my life. The most sad part was, that the healthy people remained behind, and that those, who were in need of care, were sent on the journey. We must, however, confess how God protected us in our great need. God puts a load upon us, but He helps us to carry it.

No. 329

Eyewitness report of the superintendent W. L. of Schivelbein, district of Belgard in Pomerania
Original. 31. January 1952. 10 pages.
Printed in part.

The first great expulsion in July 1945, and the assembly camp for expellees in Schivelbein from January to April 1946, as clergyman in the camp; my own expulsion in April 1946

First the author describes the situation before the Russians entered Schivelbein, and his own work as clergyman during the time of the Russian occupation.

The first Sunday in July 1945 was one of the worst days, which my parish, which was so accustomed to hardship, had to suffer. I came back during the afternoon from a service in another parish, and was surprised that the streets were so quiet and empty; it was in fact as quiet as in a cemetery. What had happened? 1 000 people had been driven, without special clothing and victuals, both old and young, just as they were found in the streets, and literally hunted 100 kilometres across the Oder.

Polish soldiers had also been during my absence in the vicarage, but as my third son was ill with typhus, they committed no act of violence, and left my wife to look after him. As I found out afterwards, I was on the list of those to be expelled, but the messenger, who was to bring me my notice, had himself meanwhile been expelled. The whole action was shocking, and really a crime against humanity. The families were torn asunder, and many perished in the streets, the halt and the lame remained lying in their misery. After the expulsion the dwellings were plundered. Other towns in the neighbourhood did not suffer such an expulsion. In November there was a similar action, which was indeed not so extensive, but the more merciless, because it was carried out during bitterly cold weather.

In a few sentences the author reports on church life in Schivelbein, and then continues:

From January to April we suffered a particularly hard lot. But Schivelbein was now the chief assembly camp for the transports, now better organized and protected, and which aimed at a complette expulsion of all Germans east of the Oder and Neiße. A previous camp for ethnic Germans with good barracks served as camp here. It now became clear to even the most hopeful people, that God was going to bring us into another land. This incurred a great abundance of work and responsibility for the church, but we found people ready to help. I had to go to the camp almost every day.

I received access without difficulty to the severely isolated camp, and was, therefore, able to help many people to come into the camp, in order to be registered there. I often met Superintendent Zitzke of Belgard, who visited his parishioners.

Up to the present the journey to Germany on the other side of the Oder, was like going through parts of the Balkans, which were infested with robbers. Most of the small luggage the people had with them was stolen by bands of robbers, who jumped into the trains heavily armed and ready to do anything. Indeed the clothes were often torn off the people's bodies, so that many arrived half-naked.

Most of my parishioners at the Oder frontier, who went away in 1945, because they had no further means of existence and would have starved to death, came to me beforehand, and received God's blessing. How often have I said the prayer with them: "I am a pilgrim on earth", and how often did I remind them of God's words: "I will protect thee in all thy ways". The number of Germans became continually smaller, and our home kept dying out. We heard more foreign words than German ones, and we got continually lonelier.

Since the camp was in Schivelbein, the expulsion was carried out on a large scale. Germans came from the whole of East Pomerania, homeless and wanderers. The transports, which passed through our town, became continually more frequent, and came from many other parts, with their few goods and chattels. First people could use small hand-carts, but later on, they were only allowed to take with them, what they could carry in their hands or on their backs, and that was very little. It was a sad sight, and even these transports were often plundered, just before they reached the camp. It was sometimes possible for me to smuggle Germans from my parish into these columns, which came to the camp, and from there they went across the Oder. The Poles knew this, but let me do it.

The important question always was, who would be on the next transport. The Germans often waited weeks with their few packed things. At first the transports were orderly, but this gradually ceased. When railway trucks happened to be available, the people were suddenly driven out. This was often done by streets. It, however, also happened, that there were suddenly no wagons available, and then many transports had to wait for weeks in the camp. But the Germans helped one another in the camps splendidly, with the help of German nurses. We also bought large quantities of bread, and in this way helped many of the occupants of the camp, who were in dire need.

I was often able to hold services in the camp, and never had difficulties in getting permission. No transport went away from Schivelbein, without my having held at least one church service, before the departure.

I still have very vivid pictures before my eyes. On the market square I let the columns pass, and there was a pressing and waving of hands, and many eyes full of tears. Those, who remained behind, greeted those who were going, knowing that they would soon be going also. I was almost always present at the entrainment, and could alleviate hardships. I also got into every wagon to give the people a short last blessing. Once in a goods wagon, I held a funeral service for a child, which had just died. We then buried the child without its parents, who had been expelled.

I was continually giving advice and help to people before their departure, so that my study was often like the consulting room of a doctor, who was overrun with patients. I often had to give advice without full knowledge of the actual circumstances, as we were almost always quite isolated. However, we had found out for certain, that the transports by way of Stettin had arrived in Lübeck.

I unfortunately had no contact with my church superior authority, and had heard rumours, that it had moved from Stettin to Greifswald. The whole time I had to come to decisions on my own.

The time was now approaching for my family and myself to depart, for the great majority of my parishioners were no longer in Schivelbein, as they had no further means of existence, and all their available possessions had been bartered for victuals. My wife helped me untiringly and faithfully during the whole time.

At the beginning of the Russian occupation there were still some thousands of my parishioners in Schivelbein, but as a result of the expulsion the number had sunk to a few hundred. Some of them had fled in time at the beginning of March 1945. In normal times Schivelbein had a population of over 10 000. I was able to hold simple confirmations, and during the whole time confirmation instruction, and services for children could be held.

At the beginning of May 1946 we came into the camp accompanied by a large portion of the remaining parishioners. A small part remained behind, but they were almost all expelled in the course of the summer. One now scarcely hears a word of German in this absolutely, and originally German land[155]). We remained in the camp, and were entrained on the railway for Stettin, and came from there to Lübeck. I was also able to do my duties as a clergyman on the ship, and an old woman, who had died on board, was buried according to the custom of sailors, by being lowered into the sea at sunset with God's blessing.

Scarcely were we in the camp of Pöppendorf, when we heard to our joy, that our second son was still alive. We had for a year heard nothing of him, but he had always heard from expellees how we were.

The report ends with remarks on the general church life of the parish of Schivelbein.

No. 330

Eyewitness report of the clergyman Erwin Seehaber of Gross-Wittenberg, district of Deutsch-Krone in Pomerania
Photo-copy. 7. December 1949. 7 pages.
Printed in part.

Experiences on an expulsion transport at the end of February 1946

In the first part of his report the author describes the flight, the running down by the Russians, and the sufferings under the Russian and later under the Polish occupation.

The news came like a thunder-bolt to us, that the Germans were being driven out of the territories east of the Oder. On the 26. February 1946 a group of militia appeared in the monastery; they were headed by the second mayor, and had a list of all the Germans, who were to go with the first transport, my name was at the top of the list. We had to pack and get out of the place within 10 minutes. It was, however, impossible to think of packing, as the militia men were standing around in the room, and tore everything valuable out of one's hands, when one wanted to pack it. I succeeded in putting warm clothes on the children, and in packing some victuals. My wife was at work, but was not on the list. It was only when I energetically protested, that she was put on the list and informed, that she was to be expelled.

We were then brought severely guarded into a large building, and my wife appeared towards the evening. In the course of the day and the night about 400 persons were driven together here from the surrounding villages. All of them reported, that they had had to evacuate their dwellings within 10 minutes, and that they only had been able to bring a few things with them. Many of them had had to tramp as much as 10 kilometres, and as the snow was deep, they could only get along with great difficulty. Many women had to throw away their baggage, as they had to carry their little children, who otherwise would have collapsed of exhaustion in the deep snow. For they were mercilessly driven on by the militia, who procceeded in reliefs by sledges. Most of these people arrived at the camp completely exhausted.

The building was overcrowded, and there were about 36—42 people forced into a room of 30 square metres. We could not rest, and had only a very small amount of straw. We had to lie or sit on the bare floor, and the sanitation was utterly inadequate. There was no food, and no-one was allowed to leave the building. The transport was supposed to depart on the 27. February, but it was delayed. It became continually more unbearable to remain in these small rooms. I succeeded after much trouble in getting permission for us to go into the yard, in order to get fresh air, and to wash ourselves with the snow, as we had no water. On the 28. February 1946 there was at last some food, at midday we received an indefinable warm soup, and in the evening 2 slices of dry bread and coffee. We received this diet every day, until the transport departed on the 3. March 1946.

Everyone breathed more freely, when we left the camp, and were taken to the station. There were goods wagons there, and 37 persons were put into each wagon. Most of the wagons were defective, and had no stoves. Our food on the way consisted of one loaf for 4 persons, and a tablespoon of dried milk. The train at last moved off on the 3. March 1946 at about 17 o'clock, after a second transport had arrived from Treptow-Rega, and to which our train was coupled. We reached Stettin towards the evening on the 4. March, after having made long detours, because many bridges had been destroyed, and were not repaired.

We were again put into a camp, which was about 3 kilometres from the railway station at Tornay. The camp consisted of some blocks of houses, which were surrounded by barbed wire. The camp was much too small for the number of people, as another transport had arrived before us. The people were then simply driven like cattle into the next-door houses, until it was impossible to get anymore in. A sentry was posted there, and that was the end of the matter.

The scenes, which we witnessed, were simply shocking: children screamed for hunger and cold, most of the windows were broken, women cried and collapsed of exhaustion. In the room, into which we had been forced, a woman with 5 children went mad. It was a shocking night. The next morning we were brought into the actual camp, and were first registered. Everyone received a card with his name and occupation; this card indicated the different stages, which one had to pass through, before being transported further. We had to go to be deloused, and then to the customs, that is to say to have one's baggage searched. What seemed to be of use was stolen, and the searching was very thorough. Anyone, who was found with jewerlery, had to undress until he was naked. Children, who were a year old and still lying in a parambulator, had to be taken out of it; the parambulators were stolen. As I had no more valuables, my savings bank book was taken from me, but I managed to save my family book.

The customs office was like a ware-house, all kinds of things were lying about, such as cloaks, dresses, shoes, bacon, sausage, perambulators, furs, trunks, beds, etc., all had been stolen. The stay in this camp was more horrible than in Greifenberg; the people literally had to lean on one another. Food was to be distributed, and even milk for children, but when one had been queueing up for 4—5 hours, and it was finally one's turn, there was then nothing more left.

On the 9. March 1946 in the morning we at last went to the station. There was a truck for aged and sick people. If I rightly remember, it was an English truck, which was driven by an Englishman. We were then put into goods and passenger wagons. Some of the wagons had no windows nor stoves. On the way to the station we again received dry bread for the journey. We at last departed in the afternoon for the west. There was more plundering on the way by Poles, who jumped into the slow moving train and threw out all that they could lay hands on. The train guard, which was in the first wagon behind the engine, did not trouble itself about this.

We all breathed freely, when we arrived in Lübeck, and saw that there were no Russians in the station.

No. 332

Recorded statement of W. S. of Küssin,
district of Greifenberg in Pomerania
Original 26. July 1952. 9 pages.
Printed in part.

Attempts by the Poles to drive Germans out prohibited by the Russians in July 1945; expulsion at the end of April 1946

After some statements about the municipality of Küssin, the delayed and unsuccessful flight, the ruthless behaviour of the Russians, and the taking over of the administration by the Poles, the author continues as follows:

The 3 Poles, who appeared in my house on a Saturday at the end of June or the beginning of July 1945, wanted to occupy 3 farms. I refused, and shortly afterwards a Polish military detachment, under the command of a second lieutenant, came with instructions to evacuate the village of the German population. The Poles at that time had the intention of clearing the Germans out of a strip of land, 50 kilometres wide to the east of the Oder. We had to leave our village within 3 hours. After we had trekked to within 2 kilometres of Karnitz, there came a counterorder that we could return. In the meanwhile the Poles had driven all the cows together on to one farm. When we came back, they released the cattle, and moved off to Karnitz. A Pole had quartered himself on my farm. He had promised me, that when I returned I would find everything as I had left it, and he, in fact, kept his promise.

Everyone breathed more freely, but unfortunately our joy did not last long. For on Monday more Polish civilians came, and told us the dates, on which we should be driven out. We were, however, not driven out again, because the Russian commandant refused his permission. After about 14 days the Poles departed to Zedlin, and we were very pleased about this.

8 days later a Polish non-commissioned officer appeared, and told us that the people of Zedlin would be expelled the next day, and that we had to join their trek. At first we did not believe it but the next day, during the forenoon, about 150 people arrived in the pouring rain and under Polish guard. As these people from Zedlin were wet through and through and were tired, there was a halt made. The leader, a Polish sergeant-mojor, instructed me to tell our people, that we must be ready to move off within 2—3 hours. Sad at heart I spread this information. All lamented, as no-one wanted to leave his home. At 14 o'clock the people of Zedlin departed.

As I was mayor, I was ordered officially to remain with 3 families, whom I was left to choose myself. I drew the sergeant-major's attention to the difficulties, which were to be expected from the militia, and asked him to inform the villagers himself. He had obviously expected this request. However, when the people from Zedlin departed, there was also no-one more in Küssin to be seen, with the exception of a mentally deficient woman, who also afterwards departed, and was never seen again.

Towards evening the villagers appeared again. They had meanwhile been hiding in the woods. During the afternoon everything was remarkably quiet in the village, but in the evening I heard shots, and the militia appeared with about 12—14 women and children, whom they had found in the village. The militia rebuked me, because so many Germans were in the village, in spite of the driving out, and they demanded that these should be sent behind the treck. They, however, agreed, that this need not be carried out, if all these people promised to work.

After the action of expulsion was supposed to have been finished, everyone breathed more freely, but in many villages, in which there was no Russian Headquarters, the Germans were driven out by force[456]).

In two sections the author describes how Polish civilians kept trickling in from September 1945.

After the Poles had first tried to get the Germans to go away voluntarily, they proceeded, about March 1946, to drive them out by force. On the 27.

April 1946 a leading Polish official in the village demanded the list of the last Germans, who were still in the village. A great part of the villagers had already disappeared, and were mostly in other villages, working for the Poles, and, therefore, enjoyed a certain protection. The chief official did not say a single word to the effect, that we were to be expelled the next day. This we learned from the Polish mayor only 2 hours before it took place. As I had no idea that it would happen, I had gone with my wife on this day to visit relatives in Lensin. From here I was called back. The result was, that we had only 10 minutes to pack, and, therefore, could take practically nothing with us.

After this sudden expulsion, we had to wait at the Polish office in Karnitz 5—6 hours, until it was dark. Then we had to walk in the night to Greifenberg, which was about 23 kilometres away, and we were only allowed to take hand baggage with us. As some people had a good amount of baggage, they had to leave a considerable portion behind, because they were unable to drag it all with them. The Poles were waiting for this and greedily standing around, in order to take these things for themselves. I, however, caused my comrades to take everything they possibly could with them.

We at last arrived in Greifenberg at about 2 o'clock in the morning. The Poles had allotted 3—4 carts and horses for the sick and those who could not walk, also some baggage was loaded in these. When we had arrived in Greifenberg, we did not go direct to the place of assembly, but into a side street. Here the electric lighting was put out, and a horde of Polish soldiers fell upon the carts, and plundered them so thoroughly, that many a poor person lost the last few chattels which he possessed.

After we had remained a day and a half at the place of assembly we were put, 30—40 persons at a time, in cattle trucks, and taken to the assembly place in Stettin-Frauendorf. On the way we were not actually plundered, but many attempts were made to do so. We were protected by Polish railway militia, who caused us to fasten the doors firmly inside with strong wire. At the assembly place in Frauendorf we were all registered, deloused, and had to go through the customs. Here many of our belongings were seized, and many women were stripped to their chemises by female customs officials. Savings bank books were in particular seized. After having remained for 2 days in Frauendorf, we had the good fortune to be taken to Lübeck on a German ship under English protection. Here we were assigned by the camp at Pöppendorf to the places, where we are at present living. Unfortunately many of us were also bitterly disappointed here.

The author now gives a survey of the buildings in Küssin, which were destroyed by the Russians, and then continues:

About 20 of the approximately 130 inhabitants of Küssin came with my transport to West Germany. Some families were kept back to work, and were not expelled until 1947, and then most of them remained in the central zone. Of the other families, who had gone to the neighbouring places, some came with the inhabitants of these places to the west.

The author closes by making statements about illnesses and deaths in Küssin during the Russo-Polish occupation.

No. 341

Eyewitness report of the farmer Heinrich Kauf of Giersdorf, district of Neisse in Upper Silesia

Original. 6. January 1953.

Ruthless attempts by the Polish militia to drive the people out. The treatment of German farmers who had been dispossessed of their property by Polish settlers, until the expulsions at the end of February to the beginning of June 1946 in the district of Neisse.

On the 28. June 1945 I was on my 70 German morgen farm, and had just fed and groomed two horses and three colts. Just as I came out of the stable, a messenger was there who said, that everyone had to appear at the inn with 20 kilogrammes of handbaggage within 2 hours. I was dumbfounded. My wife had been confined the evening before with a little girl. I was still standing at her bedside, and did not know what to do. First I went to the mayor, Burgitzki. He said quite abruptly: "Leave your wife at home. You must go away with the children". I had been to the mayor twice, and, when I came back home again, the Polish militia was already there and shouted out: "Get out at once!" Then I called my neighbour Mrs. Dümel, and got the horses and carts ready. I put my wife and child with the bedding into the cart, and in my great haste forgot to take the necessary things for the other children. Then we departed with the long column, containing people from Borkendorf, Großkunzendorf, and Giersdorf, and were driven by way of Ziegenhals, as far as Deutsch Wette, where we had to pass the night on a meadow. There a worthy woman of Deutsch Wette, named Riger, took my wife, out of pity, into her house, and allowed her to pass the night there. Our cart was plundered the same night by the Poles, who stole everything that they liked. The next morning we continued our journey, and I took my wife out of the village in a hand-cart. We had scarcely got out of it, when a Polish woman came, and took the bedding away from my sick wife.

Then we went under guard via Alt Wette, to Preiland where just behind the village the Pole, who was in command of the column, stepped on a mine on the side of the road, and 5 people from our trek were killed. We had got a good way past the spot, where the accident had happened, and then my horse would not go any further. I immediately turned round, and drove back. Then other Poles appeared, and hunted us forward behind the transport; things went on like this, until we got to Neiße.

Towards evening we came to a square, which was quite near to the River Neiße. My 6 children were lying on the cart, and I had to hold my horse's head the whole night, and the Poles kept shooting like hell. All the people were hunted several times backwards and forwards, and anyone who went too slowly received a thorough thrashing. A number of men were seized as hostages, and we were told, if anyone left the square, these men would be shot. Owing to the intervention of a midwife, my wife and the new-born child were allowed to sleep on the floor of a house nearby, which had been plundered. The third day the Poles shouted out: "All pocket knives, long knives, watches and gold and silver things are to be handed over. Everyone will be searched, and anyone, who has still got any of these things, will be shot".

The sixth day towards evening we were allowed to leave the camp. We had to travel by way of Woitz near Ottmachau; the Poles did not allow us to cross any bridge, so we had to go over the emergency bridge near Klein Briesen, and found night quarters in this village. On the 6. July we travelled home full of hope. We had hardly crossed the border of Giersdorf, when we were received by the Poles. I was beaten in an inhuman manner, and we had to turn about, and were hunted back to Bischofswalde. A transport of Germans was driven together here, and again we had to go with it. I had to leave the cart and horse behind, and to walk with my wife, who was very weak, and with the small children, whom I had to carry in turns, as their feet were already sore from walking. We reached the camp in Neiße dead tired, and without a bit of bread. My wife could hardly move a limb, as she was in such pain. In addition to that, she had the whimpering child.

The next morning we went further, under guard, by way of Ottmachau, to Glatz. My children were so hungry, that they could not go any further. In Ottmachau we escaped from the wretched trek in an unobserved moment, and fled in fear into a cellar. There we waited in great terror, until the worst was past. We then went back by round about ways through Klein Briesen, where we were well received by Mrs. Schäfer. Mrs. Schäfer gave us what she could, and we had to remain there 8 days, as my wife was so exhausted by the hardships, that she could not go any further.

On the 18. July we went to my sister-in-law in Hermannstein, where my wife remained with the children. On the 19. July I went back to Giersdorf, and worked for a Pole on my farm. I was not allowed to bring my wife and children with me, but I worked for the same Pole until the 1. August. On the 2. August the Pole brought me to the farm of Rudolf Metzner. Then my Pole fetched me back to my farm. There were 3 Polish families on my farm, and all had to be divided into three parts. I was only good for work. On the 8. August my wife and children came to Giersdorf, but I only received food for myself. My wife had to weave bread baskets with the children, and in this way to earn the scantiest necessities of life.

I had threshed on my farm of 70 German morgen of my own land and 40 of lease land, more than 800 hundredweight of grain, and had to be satisfied with 6 hundredweight of grain for myself, which I had ground in my own mill. The Poles divided the rest into three parts, sold it or made it into strong liquor. Further I had 10 German morgen of potatoes and 9 of turnips. We could eat at least as many potatoes as we liked. From 3 German morgen of rape seed I got a litre of oil for myself.

There was then another expulsion of the whole village on the 26. February 1946. At midnight on the 25. February the Poles came, and hunted us with all the others into the inn. The children, who were all asleep, had to get out with the scantiest clothing on and without electric light, into 20° Centigrade of cold. We then sat in the cold room of the inn, until 6 o'clock in the morning. Then the Pole Lucas Betnatz fetched us back home, as his wife was lying in bed with inflammation of the lungs, and he had no-one to look after her.

My wife had to do this, and also to keep house for them, but under the condition, that we did not keep all the children with us. My eldest son Josef had to go the very next day to Langer Richard's Pole, as a labourer, and the two girls Martha and Elisabeth, who were respectively 6 and 4 years of age, we had to send to acquaintances in the Sudeten country. My wife had to bring them in the night in fear, and at the risk of her life across the frontier. The children remained there, until the beginning of March, when the Germans were driven out by the Czechs.

In June 1946 the departure from the country began. From the 9.--10. June we did not sleep a single minute, for a Pole came from our farm towards evening, into our dwelling, which had already been often plundered, and without saying a word sat in the room, until we were all outside. So the departure began well. We were hunted out of the village like stray dogs, and those had the best luck, who were able to jump onto a cart quickly; the others had to run like hunted game. The Polish mayor rode behind the people on a horse, which he kept whipping. After 2 days in a camp, we had to be checked again, and everything was thoroughly searched. Anyone, who possessed anything valuable, was robbed. Then we were all loaded into cattle trucks, and were happy, that we at last had our peace.

We could not believe, that we were again amongst Germans, when we arrived on the 17. June in the place, where we are now living.

No. 343

Eyewitness report of the photographer Josef Buhl (died on 11. November 1947) of Klodebach, district of Grottkau in Upper Silesia.

Photo-copy 1946/47. 14 pages.
Printed in part.

Supplanting of the Germans by Polish settlers, and coercive measures of the administrative authorities, expulsion out of dwellings and farms, internment in the forced labour camp in Grottkau, and expulsion at the end of May 1946

In the first part of the report the author describes the circumstances of the flight from the Red Army, the return home after the capitulation, and experiences he had under the Russian occupation.

We were cut off from the world behind the Iron Curtain without newspapers and wireless. Unfortunately the pleasant news never proved to be true, but the bad ones with certainly proved to be so. We were horrified to hear, that Polish families were coming from the east to settle in our villages. We regarded our mayor as a pessimist when he said: "Next week the catastrophe will break over our village", and this catastrophe came. The 28. June we shall never forget.

They came in trucks from Saybusch and from Galicia. First of all the drivers plundered all they found, furniture, sewing machines, etc., and broke cherry trees and trampled down the strawberry beds. They indeed left us soon again but the others did not leave us again. Every house received one or several families. They lived in the best rooms and not only did they take the best furniture for themselves, but also the cattle and our clothes, tools, etc.; everything belonged to them which had up to then been our property. Work was the only thing they did not take from us. We were allowed to work and had to do so.

Soon a Polish administration was established, but the German population had not been informed of this before. It was sufficient that we felt it. All German signs had to disappear. The German names of places were changed into tongue-twisting Polish ones. The sign-posts received new inscriptions in the Polish language. One could not find one's way about in one's own home.

The author here reports briefly on the behaviour of the new local authorities and continues:

The harvesting time came. Then there appeared a Russian civilian commissar with a machine-pistol, and drove the German farmers to work. After a short time he was substituted by a military commando. A German farmer never needs to be driven to work. Although all our draught animals had been stolen and everything had to be mown by hand, the harvest was brought in. We sweated and worked ourselves to death. The Russian military commandos insisted on a speedy threshing. Soon trucks rushed through the villages, in order to bring away our grain. 50% of the harvest belonged to the Red Army, the rest was for the Poles.

There came terrible reports from the neighbouring villages of the Neiße district. Unfortunately these were not rumours, as we tried to persuade ourselves. No! It was the bitter truth, that we were going to be expelled. The German population, the hard-working farmers who had been living there for generations, the workers and craftsmen were driven out of their homes and village, like a herd of cattle by Polish soldiers and bandits; and these wretched people did not know why this was being done nor where they were to go to. Every village had its turn. We still do not know today where these people landed and what has become of them.

This crime against innocent people soon began to be committed also in our district. We saw with horror how the Germans were brought away from Lindenau. Lobedau had already suffered its fate. Strange to say, our black days were always Fridays. But the blackest Friday of all was the 24. August. We had no idea of what was happening, and had not noticed that trucks of every conceivable kind had arrived and unloaded militia.

Our work was finished and we wanted to sit down for lunch, when a bandit in civilian dress and with a carbine entered and summoned us to leave the house, within half an hour. When I asked why, he gave no answer, but began to plunder the drawers and cupboards.

That was the expulsion from our homes. Quite early in the morning the village had been surrounded by militia making flight impossible. The old basket-maker Scheurel was shot at, when he attempted to flee and bled to death. Wagner, whose wife was already dead, hanged himself in desperation. We were given no time to finish eating. We had to pack the most necessary things together in haste and get out of the house, for drunken militia men had already arrived, in order to drive us out with truncheons. They searched our handcart which was already in the yard, and tore my brother-in-law's coat from his back. If we had not hurried, we should have been stripped naked before getting to the street.

All the villagers were driven together on the large farm of Finger. Some of them had succeeded in hiding themselves in straw and escaped the expulsion this time.

We now stood in the yard for hours under severe guard. Russian soldiers came, in order to get hold of workers for their threshing commandos. They chiefly took pretty young girls. As these did not go voluntarily, they were simply torn away from their families. We others had to parade separately in front of the outhouse, lay down our baggage before the door and enter up the steps, men to the left and women to the right. Inside we were bodily searched, this was done thoroughly and accompanied by punches and boxing of the ears. Nothing escaped these bloodhounds. From me they took all I had, tobacco and pipe, mirror and comb and, of course, my money. I came out again stripped and looked for my rucksack which I saw lying empty on the ground: the rucksack had also been thoroughly searched. Next to it there lay half a loaf and my carving knife. The rest of the contents were gone. Blanket, working trousers, stockings, soap and towel, everthing was gone.

My baggage was now light. Many people had volunteered to the Russian commandos, in order to escape the torturings of the Poles. The rest of us were put under guard and driven out of the village. Trucks brought the booty to Grottkau.

Our miserable procession moved slowly towards Lärchenhain, now called Ciescowic. In front of the old castle, which was the robbers' nest, we made a halt and were counted. The women and children all came together in the big hall and the men were shut up in the cellar, and this was an awful one. The old fashioned vault without side walls was low, the small latticed window opening let practically no light in, and the air was mouldy and stifling. In this place we 60 men had to crouch, as it was impossible to stand or sit down. This was not the first time, that this cellar had been used as a prison.

A few weeks before all the men of the place, who had belonged to the Party, were cruelly tortured by the Polish militia men in this place, before being transferred to the prison in Grottkau.

After we had been 3 days in this dungeon without receiving any food from the Poles, we were inspected by a Russian. This man was furious, and shouting and cursing made a loud protest, because of the inhuman way in which we were being accommodated. The result was that all of us, also the women and children, received new quarters in the cowsheds. Here it was to some degree supportable.

No-one troubled about rations for us, but the robber militia graciously permitted the Germans of the village to bring us food. Also we were no longer so severely guarded, so that many succeeded in escaping. It even appeared as if flight was being condoned by the inattention of the guard. We continually became less in numbers. I disdainfully refused an offer to purchase my release, by betraying where valuables were hidden. We had imagined that the purpose of our being driven out of our homes had been fulfilled by the five days plundering of our empty dwellings. But we had made a great mistake.

My plan to try and escape at midday did not succeed. The guard was suddenly increased, farm carts drove up, we were loaded into them and drove off. Guarded by heavy armed militia we were making for an unknown destination. We were able to observe that we were going in the direction of our district town of Grottkau.

On an open space outside the town of Grottkau was the building of the former Provincial School. There we were brought. We passed the first night in a large room, which had previously been the gymnasium and in which church services had also been held. The next day early in the morning 3 militia men had appeared with truncheons, in order to rob us again. It was, however, not possible to get anything out of our already emptied pockets. With difficulty we found quarters, a room without window-panes and with a shell hole in the roof. It was not possible to find anything better, because every cellar and loft was crowded with prisoners. Where previously 400 students had been accommodated now room had to be found for 2 000 people.

The German inhabitants of the town of Grottkau, as far as they had not already died of typhoid caused by hunger, were all in this camp, also those of the villages of Lobedau, Lindenau, Petersheide, Breitenfeld and Hennersdorf. All that was to be seen here was misery. The people were famished to skeletons, weary and utterly without any strength at all.

In front of the adjacent store, we received straw. There were no chairs and tables. It was only possible for 16 of the 19 occupants to lie down and sleep in the room, and that was if we huddled ourselves close together. Three of us had to sleep in the vestibule with people from Grottkau. Our blankets had been stolen, three of us had to cover ourselves with a ragged piece of cloth, which on the edges was hanging in fringes. All those, who were not dangerously ill, had to get up at 7 o'clock and go to work. We were brought to the town in long columns like criminals under guard. It reminded one of the slave trade of the middle ages, when we were drawn up on the town's square. We were examined like goods for sale, in order to decide that we were suitable for doing the dirtiest work. Our food consisted of three slices of bread daily, and half a litre of luke warm water, which was called potato-soup, because some old potatoes which stank at this time of the year were added to it. However, hunger is the best appetizer. On Sundays there was nothing. The food was the same for all, that is to say for adults, children and infants. It is no wonder, that the mortality continually increased. Typhoid fever was general, because of hunger. One had to queue up in front of the closets and the condition of these, hygienically speaking, was indescribable. There was a plague of flees, lice and Russian scabies. All, both adults and children, died in masses. The corpses were packed in paper or old sacks. A man had to bring them to the cemetery in a handcart, which was so short that the legs were dragged behind on the ground. If necessary, he put two into one cart, and also there were a number of corpses put on top of one another in the grave. This was the position in the hunger camp of Grottkau. The members of the Party in the prison were treated better.

Thus two weeks passed. We hoped for a miracle, but it did not happen. The English ought to have seen this, but they did not see it. The third week came, and one felt how one's strength was gradually decreasing. It was impossible for us to continue like this, but no help from outside was to be expected. I did not want to fall a victim to typhoid caused by hunger, but I thought it would be better to die in an attempt to escape. That would be quicker than being slowly murdered in this most brutal way.

The author now reports on his successful flight from the camp and his return to his native village, after the Russian commandant in Karlshöh had promised to help him against the Poles. Soon after other villagers also succeeded in escaping.

Conscious of being the victors the Poles were much wilder and more brutal than before we were driven out. Our farming population had to be satisfied, if they were further tolerated on their own farms as farm-laboures and farm-girls. The treatment varied very much. The one had much to put up with, the other less.

The Poles had a peculiar form of administration. There was no uniform system, but every district and every municipality had its own laws, which were in accordance with its own caprices, and every farm also had its own form of chicanery.

It is true, that for the most part the farmers could live in their own houses, but they had to carry out the orders of the Poles living in the same house. All of them from 10 years of age up to old age had to line up for work every day at 7 o'clock before the municipality building. There the Poles selected their workers just as on the slave-market of Grottkau. Those, who were not occupied in farm-work, had to clear away refuse, fill up trenches or fell trees and make fire-wood. A Polish forester was of course present, and everyone, who tried to shirk work, was thrashed with a truncheon.

Our school had become Polish, and German children were not allowed to go into the street. The Polish riffraff was allowed to molest and beat German women and children with sticks on their way to and from their work. The Germans had no right of complaint. We were utterly defenseless and at the mercy of the mob. The number of bandits on the roads increased. If one went into the country, one had to reckon with being stripped. This rabble was insatiate.

We had to look on, while they went about in our suits and dresses, rode about on our cycles, and showed off with all kinds of things, which were our property. All that they possessed was stolen, but originally had been obtained by German diligence and German work, this included what they sold in our German shops for Polish zlotys. They did not even believe themselves, that they could impress us in this way.

The author now reports on further humiliation of the Germans and chicanery on the part of the Polish authorities.

The year 1945, which had brought us so much suffering, now came to an end. We hoped for better things in the new year. The winter had been exceptionally mild, which was a piece of luck for the famishing German people, that had not clothes enough or money for fuel. Compulsory work continued, and was more severely enforced at the beginning of spring.

When workers were despatched to Ehrenforst on the 11. January 1946, mostly women and girls were sent, who were not wanted in our village. The victims, who had no idea that they had been denounced, were suddenly, without being allowed to make any preparation, loaded in trucks and sent to an unknown destination. Mothers were ruthlessly torn away from their children, and children from their parents. For many weeks, no-one had any idea of the fate of these deportees.

The mortality increased owing to the conditions of life. Also in the country there was a plague of typhoid caused by hunger. The longer the torturing of our Bolshevist Polish oppressors continued, the more we lost our courage. The change, which we expected with the month of May, did not occur, at least not in the way, in which we had expected it. It did not prove to be true, that the Polish administration would terminate in a year.

And what numbers of rumours had been spread in this year! And yet we must not condemn them all, for without these little sparks of hope, which were spread and went from mouth to mouth, most of us would have already succumbed to a final fit of desperation. However, in the course of time we got worn out, and belief and hope disappeared.

The conduct of the Poles did not lead one to assume, that they were even thinking of leaving the country. The expulsion of the German population from the districts of Glatz and Frankenstein absolutely contradicted the pleasant sounding rumours. It was not clear to us, why the expulsions were carried out, and we did not know where the people were brought. We heard similar reports from Breslau. The month of May brought the decision, but a different kind of one from what we had expected. For posters in German and Polish officially informed us, that we were to be expelled. The date of our expulsion was not made clear, but the general opinion was, that weeks or months might pass before it was actually carried out. It happened, however, suddenly.

On the 23. May about 10 o'clock we were summoned to be ready to depart at 13 o'clock with our baggage. We had just time enough to pull out the things, which had been for more than a year underneath the floor. They would now be lost in any case. For the third time we left our home, which had for long been no home. This home belonged to us no longer, as we possessed nothing and had nothing to expect. We had nothing more to lose and, therefore, it was this time not so hard to take leave. We could only hope, that it was true, that the journey was to Germany, as we had read on the poster and not to Siberia, for we had been so often deceived.

We were thus for the third time ready to depart from our home. It was 23 kilometres to the entraining station in Grottkau, and we had to walk. We were not allowed to take our handcarts with us, and that was the last piece of chicanery. When we saw that six horses and carts drove up, we hoped, that at least the sick, the aged, the infirm and children would be brought to the railway.In this we were also disappointed, and the Poles did not even possess so much humanity as to do this.

Before we departed, individual Germans were called up by name and asked to choose, whether they would remain or go, this was indeed a magnanimous favour towards those who had distinguished themselves as good workers. Those chosen, however, declared unanimously, that they did not want to remain behind. Thereupon the governor cried out bad humouredly: "Go then". We were pleased at this decision, for we had been afraid of being forceably kept back as slaveworkers. According to orders we took our baggage, that is to say our last goods and chattels from the handcart and what we couldn't carry in our two hands had to remain behind. We thus had to leave there many things of vital importance and left our home for the third time.

The long column moved off on its toilsome and bitter march, and on this march we had again to suffer the cowardly brutality of the lowest instincts of the Poles. It was indeed permitted to take as many necessities and victuals as each person could carry; the result was that everyone had endeavoured to bring away as much as possible and had loaded himself far above his strength. Many realized after the first 100 metres, that it was impossible to carry all the baggage 23 kilometres. Their foreheads were already full of sweat. Then the first bed-sack rolled into the ditch, followed by a loaf and a package. Our last wretched possessions, of which we should later be in sore need, were thrown away like superfluous, worthless baggage. Then came the Poles with the horses and carts and overtook us at a trot in clouds of dust, in order to carry back the baggage which had been thrown away and to appropriate it.

The militia accompanying us only allowed us very short pauses to rest, in order to exhaust our strength more quickly and so to increase their booty. But on account of our burdens, it was only possible to advance slowly. First a hundred steps and then another hundred steps, and then again they shouted out: "Move on". Thus the column moved on sighing, sweating and in tears kilometre by kilometre. Only by straining ourselves to the utmost could we advance slowly. The hours passed and we could only hold out by exerting every possible effort of will-power. Our hands caused us great pain, our feet were continually refusing to move further. Gradually it became twilight, and we had to go on, panting under the burden. We were overtaken by vehicles from neighbouring villages, where the expelled Germans were more humanely treated, and not so tormented as we were. But the notorious militia from Endersdorf ordered these vehicles to stop. They had to unload and go, just like us, the remaining 8 kilometres with their handbaggage, on foot. Also they had to sacrifice their last baggage. It lay mountain high on the village green of Endersdorf.

The evening had come and the great heat was past, but our exhausted bodies had lost almost their last strength, but we had to summon up this last strength. Only with the most painful efforts could we drag ourselves forward step by step. The column was already broken up and straggling. We drove ourselves on in silence. Everyone had enough to do with himself. In complete darkness I reached Kalbendorf. In my efforts to find my people again, from whom I had got separated during the chaos at Endersdorf, I was alone, when I was attacked by bandits. It was a piece of luck for me, that other groups arrived and that nothing was stolen except my wristwatch which was sewn up in my handkerchief. Totally exhausted I arrived with the rest of what I possessed at the barracks square, where the others kept arriving one by one, and were reunited. Utterly exhausted we crouched or lay on the ground near to our possessions. We had all had to achieve something, which bordered on the superhuman, a physical and spiritual torment, a veritable way of the cross.

Our train was ready, as we heard, and was to depart at 5 o'clock. We all had to go with our baggage into a house to be registered and to have our baggage searched. The entry in the transport lists was made by Germans, the searching of our baggage and our pockets by Poles. What pleased them was taken away from us. We should not have saved much of the rest of what we had so toilsomely dragged as far as here, if circumstances had not favoured us. The bad lighting in the corridor, the general confusion, and the short time until the train was to depart, were favourable for us, and under the cover of darkness we escaped fairly unscathed the attack of these rascals on our last remaining property. It was not far to the railway station, and thanks to the organization, which was in the hands of Germans, we came quickly to our waggons. Cattle trucks were good enough for Germans, but this was not so important to us. The chief thing was, that we should now very soon be departing.

We began to breath freely again when the train started. The Poles had by their conduct made the departure from our home easy. It almost caused us joy.

In conclusion the author reports on the route of the transport and the difficult situation of the expellees in West Germany.

No. 353

Report of the clergyman of the parish of Rosenbach, district of Frankenstein in Lower Silesia

Original. 22. August 1949. 8 pages.
Printed in part.

Expulsions between February and the end of August 1946

On the first pages the author reports on the evacuation of his parish in February 1945, and the return after the capitulation, and on the arbitrary rule of the provisional Polish militia and on the increasing suffering of the Germans, under the tyranny of the Polish administration.

Everyone will understand, in the circumstances, already described, that the members of the parish, who had for long been determined to hold out on their ancestral farms, began to sigh, when the amount of work, which their Polish masters compelled them to do, was no longer bearable, in spite of their willingness to do it because of their hopes of again being free. For ill-treatment was inflicted even on women and aged people, and nothing more was left of things, which one wanted to keep, and with which one could have raised money. And this must lead to the direst need, as a loaf finally cost the mad price of 100 zlotys, that is to say 200 marks, and the value of what the Germans sold in their commission shops had considerably sunk at the end of the year 1945—1946. It is no wonder, that all this led to spiritual exhaustion. When the news reached us in February 1946 of the first expulsions of Germans from the districts of Glatz and Habelschwerdt to the south of us, this worked like a thunderbolt on us. No-one was willing to believe this, and whereas in the previous months optimistic rumours had had an uncanny effect, what we now heard acted even worse on us. But no reports could counteract the fact, that in the middle of March there had been the usual preparations for wholesale expulsions in our district town of Frankenstein. Soon afterwards, at the beginning of April 1946, the first names of villages of our district were mentioned, when those going to church were standing together before the service, and discussing the threatening danger, in a most excited manner, which could be well understood.

In anticipation of what was going to happen, we transferred our confirmation service, which ordinarily took place on Palm Sunday, back to Laetare Sunday and once more we had an hour, which we shall never forget. It was on Palm Sunday, the 14. April 1946, that the misfortune broke upon us. The very unusually small attendance at church was soon explained, by the disturbing fact, that since early morning there were double sentries at all the entrances to our village. As nothing happened after hours, we sought other explanations for the strange alarm of the Poles. Then late in the afternoon, they shouted into all the houses: „In half an hour, in 20 minutes, be ready." This shout also resounded in the vicarage, and confirmed what had been so long hovering in the air as heavy as lead, and had caused us all to make every possible preparation for an emergency. The last brief minutes were completely filled up with all kinds of preparations, which had to be carried out in feverish haste. What was it like in all the houses, where a swarm of suspicious Poles hunted everyone about, in order to tear one thing or another as quickly as possible from the people, who were running about in desperation and out of their wits?

We had to await, in front of the houses, the final decision of the expulsion commission. As the vicarage was situated somewhat out of the way, and the Poles came to it last, it was not possible to see, what was meanwhile happening, and who had been affected. There was not the time to minister to those, who were departing. The curfew hour was already there, before the Communists shouted out to us, as they went by, saying that we were not included, and must retire into the house at once.

It was not possible, until the next forenoon to find out, by going from house to house, how many families had been driven out, and when we went through Schönheide, we saw the same sad picture, the sadness of which was increased by the fact, that all our dear parishioners there had had to depart without taking leave.

Late in the evening, on Tuesday, we heard, that the next morning it would be the turn of the Reichenbach villages of Habendorf and Kittlitzheide to be expelled, and this cruel news was confirmed by an early morning walk on the 17. April. In an endless row, almost without exception from house to house, they all went to the upper part of the village, in order to be registered in the office of the Polish mayor, and then to make their way to the district town, and to depart into an uncertain future. I shall never forget the farewell, when everyone stretched out their hands, and said the last words to one another. The desolation was terrible, which prevailed after the last cart had disappeared, for only a fraction of the German population was still there, and in their place only Poles and very often 2–3 Polish families on one farm, as the locality was so undamaged.

On the 29. and 30. April the second batch went from Schönheide and Rosenbach, and there were the same painful scenes, except that in Schönheide an end was soon put to the leave-taking of the clergyman, when a squad of armed Polish police growled, accompanied by gestures, not to be misunderstood the following words: "Go home at once or —! You are a politician." But an attempt the next day at least to see once again those departing in cattle trucks at the railway station in Frankenstein was successful, although the militia interfered in different ways. The parishioners were very happy about this.

During the following four months, until the remaining fifth of the parish, had been driven out, it was evident in many ways what disastrous consequences the expulsion of the German population necessarily had for this land, which had up to now been so flourishing and cultivated. During these four months the expulsion machinery was working mercilessly, in the more northern and westerly districts of the province, but, after a short pause, rolled back again from the country around Glatz to us.

The majority of the Polish immigrants, who had partly come of their own free will, and partly had been forced to do so, came from industrial towns, and, therefore, had not the least knowledge or experience in farm work. It is, therefore, no wonder, that new gaps were torn in the stock of cattle, which had already been reduced to a minimum, by most brutal methods on the part of the Russians, because the poor creatures were exploited by the new-comers, but not properly looked after. It is no wonder, that the most ridiculous methods of cultivation were to be observed in the fields, and that it was very seldom, that weeding was done and stones removed. It is no wonder, that there was soon every form of deterioration of buildings, walls, fences, gardens, paths, streets, and above all, of valuable agricultural machines.

Far too much valuable time was spent by the new masters, in digging again and again everywhere, in order to find buried valuables, and then to convert these at once into money, and only too often into vodka. Who could understand, that, nevertheless, there was a continual lack of money? Before the harvest was really ripe, it went through the great numbers of threshing machines, which were being ruined, and then into the hands of the dealers in the town, and yet all this was not only being caused by the high deliveries demanded by the authorities. Where should this lead to? Were the houses which were uninhabited, as a result of the expulsions and which after a short time had been totally plundered, an indication of what was sooner or later to be the fate of this land?

The first mail at last arrived in our locality at the end of May 1946, and brought us, apart from the first news of those, who had already been expelled, the connection with Germany on the other side of the Neisse, which we had been so long waiting for. To our surprise it was stated in the letters we received, that also our days in our Silesian home were numbered, and that we ought to prepare ourselves. Therefore, the alarming news and rumours which were shattering our nerves, contained more truth than the messages of consolation, which were being circulated. When there was then another great sweep-out in the county of Glatz at the beginning of August, we knew, that the only question for us was, when we were going to be driven out.

It was clear, that this time only the skilled workers, who were indispensable for the Poles, would have any chance of not being expelled. If these skilled workers attached no importance to taking this chance of remaining, because they only too well knew how lonely they would be, after all the others had been expelled, this does not entitle anyone to maintain, that we East Germans had not done enough to prevent our expulsion, and that we had indeed caused it by provoking the Poles, that we had not shown enough determination and such-like tactless misrepresentations of the obvious historical facts.

We did not depart on our own accord, but we were illegally expelled by brute force, and had to yield gnashing our teeth in rage, but were powerless to resist. We would much rather have remained in the land, where our ancestors had been for centuries. It is absurd to believe, that a single one of those, who had to leave any kind of property behind him, readily went out, when the hard fate of expulsion broke on him. It is clear, that these people clung to their property quite as much as others anywhere else. What little hope had they of receiving the smallest substitute in the west of our fatherland, which had long been overpopulated. It is also clear, that after what they had already seen, their hearts bled, at the thought of how their homeland would be ruined after their expulsion.

Who was there amongst these people, who had not in his heart rebelled against the threatening catastrophe? But all outward or inward protest was relentlessly stifled by the facts, with which we were confronted. Early on the 22. August 1946, I was for the second time in Habendorf, and watched the long column of fully packed hand-carts pass. The militia, tacitly allowed leave- taking, but roughly prohibited every rendering of help. The brave evangelical Sister of Mercy of Habendorf was among the expellees. And who remained behind? At the most 10 workers' families out of the whole long and straggling village. These few people had been kept back by the Russians, for working on the 3 large farms. I had to tell these people, that we in Rosenbach and Schönheide would shortly be expelled, as the expulsion machine was again at work in Frankenstein.

Three days later, on the 25. August 1946, things had got so far. Thank God. Also this time a few horses and carts were provided for the 14 kilometres to Frankenstein, but this was only after long and verbose differences of opinions among the Poles surrounding us, and which was shattering for our nerves. Therefore, at least the aged and infirm could ride, and also a part of our baggage could come into the carts. The rest of us harnessed ourselves in front of our hand-carts. The drivers went quickly, and did not leave us much time to look behind us, also the heavy loads demanded all our strength. Finally they even allowed us to attach our hand-carts to the horsed vehicles.

We went quickly through Schönheide, where everyone was waiting in front of the houses for the order to depart. There were cries and waving of hands but no stop.

We should meet again in Frankenstein. Repeatedly the drivers let the horses trot quickly, and we were only able to run panting at the side of our carts, in order to prevent the scanty rest of our belongings from falling over the sides; this excitement was only a repetition of what had been done with those, who had been expelled before us. We, however, escaped much better than those of other villages in our district, who had had to go a much further distance without any vehicle or hand-cart. Also in the case of these people the Poles had seen to it, that each one only took so much baggage with him as he could just carry himself.

In Frankenstein we were brought into the yard of a transport firm, and we now had to sandwich ourselves in, and await what would happen among hundreds of hand-carts of every size, of travelling and washing baskets, which had been fitted with wheels, and thousands of people to whom these belonged.

It was clear, that it would not be our turn, until the earliest in the afternoon of the next day. For those, who were already waiting, had come their turn for the most part the day before or even on Friday. Further we learned, that on the day of our own departure the Germans, who had remained behind in 26 other villages, were being brought to the transport. We, therefore, required an enormous amount of patience, particularly as the sky – bright in the early morning, was continually getting more clouded, and threatened to drench us and our goods with rain.

The night was very long for us. It was good, that we had succeeded in getting the 78 year old verger, my wife and our little daughter, who was 11 months old, put up for the night in the house of the superintendent, where we had to go the next day. Outside it was very important to be on the watch. During the day we were continually surrounded by armed fellows, who in a moment had their rifles in their hands, if they saw anything they wanted, but at night things were far livelier. Many, who had crept into one of the furniture vans to shelter himself from the night which was very cool, had most unpleasant surprises, when they went back to their baggage in the morning.

Early on Monday, the so-called checking and our removal finally began. We were refreshed with hot coffee from the Red Cross, and had now the last trying phase, the checking, before us. The way to the wagons (each person had since the day before had the number of his wagon pinned on his clothes) led over the long, narrow neighbouring yard, past the long tables. There were a number of rumours, which were not very consoling. They corresponded with what our superintendent had observed, as a member of the Committee of Help for Expellees, and what he had told us clergymen. We should have to be very thankful, if not much was stolen from us.

After I had again seen our dear parishioners from Schönheide and our second Sister of Mercy, it was the turn of our village in the afternoon. We proceeded as slowly as snails in extricating ourselves from the very big yard, and reaching the street. Before we came to the gate, there was an unexpected stop. Our chief mayor appeared who was the superior of the Polish mayors for the 6 villages of our part of the district. He was a national Pole, and had been denounced by Communists as being pro-German. He had, however, always got out of the affair, and, although he was continually spied upon, did not change his attitude. What he now did, was typical of the decent character of this man. He called his own village up out of its turn, put himself at the head of it, and disappeared. Later we heard to our astonishment, that not a single one of the inhabitants of Raudnitz had been checked.

When it came to our turn we saw, that things could be different, and that there was to be a kind of counter action. Any German, who had a Pole as special enemy in his village, was followed by this man as far as here. Thus it happened, that out of many a trunk or sack, a whole series of things were, without consideration of requests and protests, thrown into the corner, where there was already a heap of clothing, linen, shoes, boots, rugs, leather articles and electric apparatuses. Others passed through easily. There were also bodily checkings, which I experienced as soon as I came into the checking yard, and was forced into a special little room for this purpose. The Poles felt one all over with their hands, and were extraordinarily quick in this work.

When I got back to our luggage, the first question I heard, before the great rummaging began, was whether I had altar pieces from the church with me. These I had, with a very sad heart, left at home, in fact with a sadder heart than our precious church books.

And then the whole performance was past, and breathing more freely we went past the last sentries through the back gate, and to the railway line, where the goods train was waiting to take us "back to Germany", as the Polish authorities called it. Some of the cattle trucks were frightfully filthy, and into each of them 36 of us were put with our baggage, whether the trucks were long or short. There was either no straw in the trucks or very little. We hardly noticed anything more, and resigned ourselves to all these drawbacks and discomforts. At last we succeeded in sandwiching ourselves in, somehow or another.

On the 27. August 1946, at 2 o'clock in the morning, our train departed with rumbling and jerking. We went to Kohlfurt, by way of Reichenbach, Schweidnitz, Striegau, Jauer, Liegnitz, Lüben, Glogau and Sagan. When we were just past Schweidnitz, and opened the doors by daylight, we began to see the scenes of devastation: ruins, debris and burnt down buildings, but much more shocking were the endless areas between the towns, which were completely covered with weeds and desolate. During the whole long night, as far as the River Neisse, we saw practically no people. This territory had been left by the population, owing to the hardships of the war during the first four months of the fatal year of 1945, and there were still no inhabitants there; everything was void and dead. It was only in that part of the province, which had been spared by the war and from which we came, that there were Polish settlers in far too great masses. We passed thousands and thousands of German morgen of good land, which were lying fallow and had become wild. It was always the same picture, until we reached Kohlfurt.

How could one avoid, in view of such things, asking ourselves what was the sense of this unjust expulsion, which we were suffering, and which numberless others were going to suffer afterwards.

There follow some personal thoughts of the author on this question.

No. 365

Eyewitness report of Mrs. G. K. of Königsberg in East Prussia
Original August 1951. 31 pages.
Printed in part.

Attempts to go away; expulsion from Königsberg in September 1948

The authoress went through what happened in Königsberg from the encirclement and the capture of the town, and after much hard suffering became an auxiliary nurse in a Königsberg hospital. After describing her way of life, she continues:

I came back to the hospital, as auxiliary nurse, through the help of the German lady doctor. The number of the Germans in hospital, however, had become very small, and many had already gone away, and we began to get desperate, because our turn had not come. This waiting and uncertainty wore us out, and exhausted our energy. He, who lost the power of will to live, could no longer be saved, and was a candidate for death. One was still registered for a transport, and departure generally occurred unexpectedly.

Christmas 1947 was approaching, and we were still living in the town, which was our home. Our life, however, was like being abroad. It was strange how these changes had taken place, for everyone wanted to go to the west, and we no longer felt at home in Königsberg; the number of Germans there kept getting smaller. All the German doctors of the hospital had gone away, and there was only a German lady doctor still there. We Germans in the hospital no longer numbered more than 200 persons, and our nerves were so rubbed up by the continual strain, that there were often unpleasant disagreements between us.

Our contacts with the Russians were very varied; many tried to obtain their permission to depart sooner by means of bribery with strong liquor and money. One hesitated at employing no means within one's power. Thus we gave a Russian lawyer some books, in return for which he promised to obtain our permits for a definite day. For the Russians very gladly accepted books, in which there were pictures, in barter. When the day of the promised departure came, for which we were noted, according to the statement of this Russian, we 7 people were disappointed and remained behind, that is to say we were not called up for departure.

After describing in detail, what kind of a Christmas she had in 1947, and also episodes with patients of her hospital, the authoress continues:

In 1947 a direct street car line was opened, however, one ran the risk of being killed, when one travelled with it. For it was always more then overcrowded. The passengers sat on foot-boards and buffers. At first the employees were German, but later on Russians took their place. The number of the Germans in the streets had become smaller, and Königsberg looked more and more like a dying town.No business-life began to get running. The few Germans who had still remained or had had to remain, were simply vegetating towards the end. In view of the uncertain future, the few of us, who had remained, were in a state of extreme depression.

One day it was stated, that all of us were now going to depart, and would be registered again. As we had often heard this before, we no longer took it seriously. Many did not go to be registered, including me, because I knew that my pass was in Schönfliess. As we also had nothing left, in order to get our permits by bribery, we had completely lost our courage. As one day also the kitchen-maids had disappeared, there were now only 16 of us in the hospital. We no longer had the energy to beg the Russians. We heard, for instance, from a girl, for whom a Russian had been sorry, that she received the permit of another girl. When the latter heard this, there was a great dispute between them. Finally the first girl handed over the permit to the other.

We went with this transport to the railway station, but many were sent away again, so that when we got back, there were 70 of us in the hospital. Many of those who went away, were sorry for me, as I could not also go. But the Russians wanted to keep me. I had often seen, how Russian nurses were abused because of their bad work, and how I was held up to them, as an example. I had in the meanwhile learned enough Russian, in order to understand and to be understood. Such occurrences caused me to doubt, whether my departure would not be delayed, or altogether hindered by my readiness to work.

Those of us, who had remained behind, had to take the furniture out of the rooms of those, who had departed, and deliver it the next day, into the Russian stores. This furniture consisted of tables, chairs, and cupboards. Our pass-ports were taken away from us, so that we began to fear, that we should perhaps be brought to the east. I was then working in a ward, where Russian and German patients were lying mixed up together. A Russian lady doctor wanted me to look after her house. I did not do so, however, because I was afraid, that I should then never get away at all.

There follow remarks about the food and conditions of work in Königsberg, then the authoress proceeds as follows:

In the summer of 1948 we thought, that we should never depart. We heard only, that transports would be assembled in the country. Thus the summer came to an end, and we had to bury the hopes, which we had nurtured so long. We were already thinking with dread of the next winter, when on the 28. September, in the evening, the Russian medical orderly and the book-keeper came to my room, and said to me in Russian, that we were all going the next day to Germany; the book-keeper threw herself into my arms. My permit was ready, they said. But when they also stated, that they had come to fetch my good couch, I began to doubt things. However, we actually received our pass-ports. The Russians fetched my couch in the night.

We then sent to the medical orderly Richard in the other hospital, who had always repaired our shoes so well, and asked him to help us packing. He was to fetch, in particular, what we were not taking with us, and he could convert into roubles. As we had been with so many transports to the railway station, we had some experience. We were astonished, that some of those who were to go said, they would not do so. In some cases we knew, that they had Russian friends, in other cases we assumed, that illness was the cause. Two evangelical Sisters of Mercy remained behind with a woman who had leprosy.

The next morning we did some shopping, in order to get rid of our roubles. On the 29. September a horsed vehicle drove up in front of the hospital for us to put our things in it. We walked as far as Prinz Street, and then we were taken by a truck to the railway station.

When we took leave of the hospital the superior and the nurses waved their hands to us, for we had had good contact with them, and this we all felt, when we took leave of one another. I had often acted as interpretess for the superior. One Russian woman cried, when she said good bye to me.

When we got into the truck, a Russian took the son of one of the woman again out the truck. We were just about to depart, when the superior of this Russian, attracted by the cries of the woman, ordered the truck to halt, and the Russian had to give the boy back to his mother.

Thus we came to the east railway station, and had to assemble in the entrance hall. It was already 13 o'clock. We had already been called up by name in Prinz Street. Then the lady book-keeper of the hospital suddenly appeared, and gave us the rest of our wages. I received 500 roubles. I bought cloth, butter and chocolate for it at the railway station. Our transport consisted of about 3000 people. Most of them came from the provinces, and had no money. Some of them were very scantily dressed, and had very little food with them, they had been on collective farms, and had had bad food, in particular, they had never received fat.

I had been spared this fate, and could, therefore, be thankful, that I had more easily survived the last year. We helped many of them with money and victuals.

The train had both passenger and goods wagons, and I got a corner seat in a passender wagon. Before departing we had to give up our pass-port, and received transit permits in return. I had 2 wooden trunks with me, a rucksack and bedding. Soldiers checked the baggage, but nothing was taken from us. Several people had to undress, as it was suspected, that they had jewelery with them. In some cases the checking took a long time. As I had so much baggage with me, it had to be thoroughly searched. Above all, we were not allowed to take money with us. A boy helped me to get my things into the train. When we were finally able to sit down after hours of tension, we then really felt, what hardships we had been through, but we got no rest, as the flies in the train tormented us fearfully.

The train departed in the night by moonlight, and I stood at the window taking leave of Königsberg; I felt very sad. Was my husband still there? Would I really find my relatives in the west? In Königsberg I had spent my youth and some years of my married life. Also the last years had made a deep impression on me, but now I had got to take leave. After we had gone a good few hours, the train stopped, and we had to get out, and stand outside. The Polish military then went through the train, and searched it; both inside the wagons and underneath them everything was checked. Then a Pole called our names out separately, and we were allowed to get in again. The Russians had thrown everything into disorder, but nothing was missing. The station was Preußisch Eylau. In the morning we reached Bartenstein. A Pole, who went and fetched a bottle of water for us, as we had requested him, asked us, why we had not chosen Polish citizenship.

From Bartenstein the engine drivers and the conductors of the trains were Germans. In our train there was a lady doctor and 25 nurses. We passed through Stolp, Stettin and Prenzlau. In Pasewalk we were sprinkled with powder against lice and fleas; here there was also coffee and soup for aged people and children. After travelling by way of Stendal and Magdeburg, we reached Dessau on the 5. October, after having been on the way from the start for 6 days. In Dessau we were shunted backwards and forwards, and many of us began to think, that we were going back again. Finally we stopped, and railwaymen came along outside the train, and told us that we had reached our destination.

In conclusion the authoress reports on her experiences in quarantine and in the refugee camp, and on settling down in West Germany.

No. 366

Eyewitness report of Mrs. M. P. of Hagenwalde,
district of Labiau in East Prussia
Original. 28. December 1951. 55 pages.
Printed in part.

Expulsion from the district of Labiau in October 1948, and journey by way of Königsberg to Pirna in Saxony

The authoress gives a detailed description of the time of the flight in the district of Labiau, from January 1945 to autumn 1948. At the end of her statements she says:

At intervals of some weeks we kept hearing reports, that transports were going to the *Reich,* sometimes from Tilsit, then from Scharlack, then from Nautzken and then from Liebenfelde, etc. Russians told us secretly, that we should soon be going away, and that they had heard this in the offices. We rejoiced and waited excitedly, but then we were told: "The director has applied to be able to keep you, as he requires workers." We should have liked to call a strike in anger, but then we should have been going to work the wrong way, and we kept on repeatedly being fooled about.

However, finally on Sunday, the 10. October 1948, we were given the order to pack our things, and to be ready in 20 minutes to depart. We had to assemble at the church in Großbaum. When we left our room, the

3 Russian families were already there, who had meanwhile been billetted in our house, and already brought bugs with them. There were also some Russians outside, and both these and the others were ready to rob the furniture and the few chattels, which we left behind. Once again we looked behind us, and a shudder went through our bodies, when we saw in what a condition our home was. The majority of the Germans had already assembled at the church, and the departure was not hard for anyone. Then the trucks drove up, with which we had for so long transported timber. We got off with the first batch. We once again looked at the church, which was practically undamaged outside, but inside this pack had established a cinema and dancing hall. The cross on the steeple offended the eyes of these fellows, and they, therefore, had offered a reward of 1000 roubles for anyone, who would take it down. However, as no-one offered to do so, they simply shot it away.

Our trucks started, and we left our home quietly and without tears. We had to get out of the truck at the Castle of Labiau, and all of us had to remain for one night. The next day the rest of our wages was paid to us, and we went to the goods station at Königsberg. In the entrance hall to the station cloth, shoes, victuals and other things, which we had not seen for years, were for sale. Here the order was given to do our shopping in 20 minutes, as all the roubles must be spent here. Although everything was very expensive, we all the same managed to get many an article, which we needed, and also such things as ham and cheese, of which we had long been deprived. We were then called to the barrier, and we were full of distrust, as we thought that we would here be robbed of everything, but things were not so bad, as we had thought. My father was allowed to go through without any trouble. My two sisters and I had to have our rucksacks searched, and we were felt all over our bodies, then we were also allowed to go through.

A goods train was already waiting, and 46 of us were put into each wagon. Then we waited for a whole day, and the next morning the train moved off. Just before reaching the Polish frontier, the wagons were sealed. After travelling 7 days, we reached Pirna in Saxony, by way of Pasewalk in Pomerania. Here we had to remain 14 days in quarantine.

Fourth Section

COMPULSORY OPTION OF THE GERMAN POPULATION OF SOUTH EAST PRUSSIA FOR THE POLISH STATE

No. 372

Letter of E. B. of the village of A., district of Sensburg in East Prussia.
Certified copy. May 1949.

Compulsory option for the Polish state enforced by ill-treatment and violence on the part of the Polish administration in February 1949[457])

I shall never forget the month of February in this year. Up to then there were still more than 12 000 of us Germans in the district of Sensburg. Then canvassing meetings were held, at which we were severely prohibited to make purchases or sales or to leave the places, where we were living, unless we exercised our option for Poland. Also the Poles and Masurians were threatened with punishment, if they bought anything from or for us Germans. The police carried out checks in the businesses and at the market, and took the few people, who had dared to come to the town without a Masurian identity card to the Police station. But even this measure did not bring the desired success.

Then the canvassers went with armed policmen to the different villages, and all Germans from 14—100 years of age were urgently ordered to appear, in order to sign. If anyone was ill in bed, they came to his house, and anyone who hid himself was hunted out, and brought to the authorities. All the inhabitants of our village refused to exercise their option for Poland. Therefore, 28 of us were put into a truck, and taken to Sensburg. I was among these people. Furthermore, there were men and women of different ages, even a mother of 8 small children, of whom the youngest was five years old. Those, who remained behind, were ordered to report themselves after 2 days to the mayor, or else they would be arrested.

We were taken out of the truck in Sensburg, half of us being handed over to the political police, and the rest being brought provisionally to the militia. First of all we were shut up in a concrete cellar. At short intervals a policeman came, and asked who had already thought things over. Later he brought us to a room next to the guardroom, he apparently did this, in order to be able to control us better. Here we were at least able to sit on the wooden floor, but we received no food.

The second evening an official said to us, that we ought to be reasonable and to sign, for, as he said, there had in January been a conference in Warsaw, at which there were representatives of the Russian, Polish, American and British governments, who had decided, that not a single German was to be allowed to cross the Oder, as there was famine there, and not enough houses. Indeed all those must come back from the Reich, who were from these parts, for it was at last time, that families should be reunited.

As, however, these parts were now Poland, and we as Germans were not allowed to live in Poland, we had got to exercise our option. Then we should have the same rights as the Poles, and within 4 days to 4 weeks our men would be back from the Reich, and would be with their families.

Many women said that, if they exercised their option, they would never be reunited with their husbands, as the latter would get a divorce, and the women would have toiled all these years in vain to maintain their children. They were then told, that the men would be called upon to come, and that, if they refused, the women would have a reason for divorce, and could marry Poles. They were also told, that permits from outside to go to the Reich, would not save them from signing. All this excited us so much, that 3 had to go to the hospital with heart attacks. I had to go the next day to the political police, and was put into a brick cell, with other companions in misery. There they took everything away from us: rugs, sheets, shawls, belts, bags, handkerchiefs and towels, soap and combs and even shoe-laces. The men had to hand over their caps and braces. Those who signed received the things back. We were given nothing to wash and comb ourselves with, during the whole week. We were to make up for what we had missed, when we went to sign, but I did not take advantage of this. We received sufficient food.

One woman told me in the cell, that for the first 3 days she had been in solitary confinement in a coal cellar, and could not sit down, because there was so much coal slack there; she also got nothing to eat. When she came into the cell, in which I met her, she was so icy-cold, that she required nearly a whole day to get warm again. She was married to a man in the Rhineland, and wanted to go with her 3 children to him, but she had to sign. We were told, that, even if Americans or Africans were present, we should have to sign all the same. There was a mother with her 16 year old daughter in the cell who told us, what the last night at the police station in her village was like: all those in arrest had to undress, until they were barefooted, and only had a chemise on. Then they had to stand outside for an hour in an icy-cold February wind. They were told, that anyone who signed could come in, but they all remained outside. When they came back inside, they had to leave their clothes in the corridor, and remain naked in the cold room, until 8 o'clock in the morning. The woman was 55 years of age, and did not sign with her daughter, until her back was all bruised with truncheon blows. Also her face was all discoloured from the blows. She could neither lie nor sit down.

We were asked again and again, why we did not want to sign. Our answers were convincing and well founded, but all the same, no-one left the building without being compelled to sign. We were repeatedly told, that this land had been Polish 700 years ago, and that the people living here now must be reunited with the Poles, who were their ancestral forefathers. The Germans were only on the other side of the Oder.

When I was asked, I said that I could not sign, as I had been born in the *Reich*. Then they hesitated a moment, and asked me where my parents and grandparents were born, and I replied that these also came from the Reich, and that I had never had relatives here. First they looked at me in doubt, but then said to me, that I must sign, and I should then get my passport and could go away. I, thereupon, replied that, if I could not go back home as a German, I was not going to do so as a Pole. I was then told, that I should be put into the forced labour camp. I was ready for this, and likewise all the others, who were put to the test.

When they saw, that we were serious, they said we could either rot in the cell, or sign. I was again several times questioned alone, and always replied to repeated questions: "My conscience forbids me doing this. I was German, when times were good for me, and I will remain so, when times are bad, even if it costs me my life".

Then my ears were boxed. The canvasser then threatened me in the following way: "I give you the order to sign, not as a Masurian, but as a Pole". Then I replied: "You put a question to me, which I have got to answer with 'yes' or 'not'; I cannot answer with 'yes' and will bear all the consequences which arise". Again my ears were boxed, and the hymnbook was put before me with the question, as to whether I could read it, as it was Evangelical. I said 'no', as I could not read the Polish language. My ears were again boxed, with the words: "Here is Poland! Here is Poland!" When I still did not sign, I was ordered to take off my cloak and clothes, and the door was shut. Then I had to bend over a chair, and was beaten with a truncheon; I was continually cynically asked at intervals, if it hurt. I clenched my teeth, and did not utter a sound. There were two other officials in the room, but all three were wearing civilian dress. One of them sat opposite to me, who watched the whole proceeding with a malicious grin.

They would have continued to ill-treat me, but someone wanted to come into the room. I had to dress myself again, and was led back into the cell with 5 other women, who had been treated in about the same way. There were now about 21 of us women in the cell. The next night one was fetched out every quarter of an hour; the next morning there were only 8 of us left in the cell, as all the others had already yielded to the violence. Some of them came back tottering, in order to tell their relatives that they had signed. As the sentry might have heard, we did not dare to put any questions to them, but we saw what they had been through.

The 8 of us remaining were shouted at, that, if we did not soon come on our own, we should see after 3 hours what would happen. We saw how hopeless the situation was, but all the same waited, until we were called. We then put our names underneath a form, on which were printed the words: "I request to be given Polish citizenship, and promise to be faithful and obedient to the Polish State". We felt, as if we had signed our own death sentence.

The men were treated even worse. They were shut up in a room, in which lime-dust had been strewn thickly. Here the poor fellows had to walk about day and night with their trousers in their hands as their braces had been taken away from them. They were forbidden to lie down or sit down, and were closely watched. They were only allowed to go out, in order to relieve themselves once in 24 hours, and this without considering whether they were old or sick. Many men and women had either heart, kidney or bladder complaints, or suffered from rheumatism, and had great pains to endure. Women were allowed to relieve themselves 3 times a day. During the cross-examinations those questioned were punched, received upper-cuts in the chin and kicks.

My foster father was 60 years old, and on one occasion he received "treatment" from 7 o'clock to 11 o'clock in the morning, and in the course of this he was continually thrust with his head against the wall; when he said, it would be better if they shot him, they gave him a cord to hang himself up, and told him otherwise to jump out of a window on the third floor, for a bullet was too good for him. Finally he had to bare the lower part of his body and to bend over a chair. He fainted, however, before he began to feel the truncheon, for he had disease of the heart. These fellows did not even hesitate to beat women and girls on their bare bodies.

We had suffered very much, but now they had violated us in the very worst way. We had now only one wish, and that was to escape from such a condition of affairs, and to get to our fellow Germans in the *Reich*.

No. 374

Letter of R. G. from the village of C., district of Sensburg in East Prussia. Original. 11. March 1949. Letter to a friend.

Methods employed by the Polish authorities to compel Germans to exercise their option for Polish citizenship

On Sunday, the 6. February 1949, at 5 o'clock in the afternoon, there was a meeting of the Town-Council for us Germans. At this meeting a local schoolmaster (called Professor), a chief forester, and a member of the Polish party along with the mayor, said the following to us: "According to an agreement with the Powers of Occupation, no more German transports will go from here across the Oder. We, therefore, give you the good advice to take Polish citizenship[458]), emphasizing that you have had 4 years to do so. We now appeal to you for the last time, without compulsion and without beating you, to give your signatures today!"

As not a single person did this, another meeting was convened for Tuesday, the 8. February. The *Landrat*, who had the rank of a kind of captain of the Secret Police, also the evangelical clergyman appeared at 10 o'clock in the forenoon. The clergyman said the following: "The Town Council has also called upon me to say a few words to you: If anyone possesses a farm, he sees that order is maintained on it, and that it is kept clean, the young Polish State must do the same in its realm; it has failed to do so for 4 years. Consider what Joseph and Mary did, they went such a long way to give their signatures; you must do the same."

The Polish *Landrat* then said: "I demand that by tomorrow evening, at 6 o'clock, there is not a single German in C. By becoming Poles you obtain the same rights, indeed even better ones than any other Pole. You can choose landed property, receive a horse, a cow, and people to work for you, you could even perhaps receive your farms back. Anyone who needs support, will receive it, also pensions". No-one was caught by this trick.

The next day at 2 o'clock in the afternoon, the commandant appeared with a militia man at my house, and took me with my wife to the Town Council, for an examination before the captain: "No, we will not sign", we said, to which they replied: "Why not", we then added: "We have 4 grown-up children in the *Reich*, and as we are old people, we want to go to them".

A small truck was standing before the building of the Town Council. When my wife was examined she said, she would do the same as her husband did. My wife was allowed to go home, but I was put into the truck. B., St. and a 19 year old tractor driver named G. were put in with me. Then we arrived in Sensburg at about 4 o'clock in the afternoon, and were put in the cellar of the Secret Police. The next day B., who was 78 years of age, was cross-examined and, of course, refused to give his signature. He then had his ears boxed a few times, was struck with a ruler on his knuckles, and then sent back into the cellar.

I cannot write you everything, my dear friend Fritz, because the whole performance continued day and night from the 8. to about the 25. February. Therefore, I will restrict myself to telling you, what I had to suffer. On the second day I was again fetched upstairs. Here there were 3 well-dressed men sitting, from 22—30 years of age. They offered me a chair, and one of them sat down close in front of me, with a cigarette in his mouth, and asked why I had not signed during the last 4 years. My reply was: "My father was German, I can't speak a word of Polish, and am going to remain a loyal German. My father would not rest in his grave, if I became a Pole; I want to go in my old years to my children in the Reich, in order that I do not need to work so hard any more." My face was then slapped, and I was ordered to clench the 5 fingers of both my hands, and then one of these men struck my knuckles with a ruler and also my bald head. "Are you going to sign?" "After this certainly not." I was again locked up.

I was 3 times beaten in this way, but the second time it was worse. Then I had to take off my boots and stockings, put my naked feet on a foot stool, and was beaten on the soles of my feet with rubber tubes. Two men continued doing this, until my feet were black and blue. Then I had to take my trousers and pants down, and received a dosing. You can imagine how 2 men from both sides laid it in, as I lay over the chair. Then I had to sit on the floor, and they lifted me onto my legs by the hair at the side of my head. They then punched the tendons of my neck, and finally put my back to the wall, seized my chin, and struck the wall with the back of my head; this they did 10 or 12 times. This continued over an hour, so that I became quite dizzy.

As I still did not sign, they said to me: "You'll come back after an hour". The fourth time I was afraid they would cripple me or torture me to death, and signed after 5 days and 5 nights.

Now I am suffering very much with my heart, and I went to the Polish doctor, who at once asked, whether I had been thrashed. He gave me a medical certificate to the effect, that I can only do light work.

We only have one desire, and that is to publish all this, in order that we may get out, for the signatures cannot be regarded as valid. About 13 000 Germans in the district of Sensburg were treated in the same way. Many had their arms and legs broken. See that the signatures of February are declared to be not valid. Why have so many transports departed, and the rest of us not? We have no idea, what the game is.

We now send you most hearty greetings from us enslaved Germans in C. I suppose, we shall never meet again.

Nr. 375

Letter of H. W. from the village of D., district of Sensburg in East Prussia.
Certified copy. May 1949.

Incidents during the measures taken by the Poles in February 1949, in order to compel the Germans to choose Polish citizenship

To all German authorities: how the Germans struggled to retain their nationality, but were all the same forced to sign for Poland. Report on my own experiences and those of other fellow Germans.

Just as if hell had been let loose the Poles began to rave and rage and to subject the Germans to every form of chicanery, in order to force them to sign. All the Germans were at their wits ends, and ran to one another, but only secretly, as the Poles had forbidden them to go from one place to the other. Also we were not allowed to buy anything, and no Pole was allowed to give a German anything. We had got to starve or sign, but this could not shake us, for we Germans had already been through even greater hardships. We were Germans in good times, and we were going to remain Germans also in bad times.

One heard how the chicanery was exercised in one village after another, and how the Germans of one village after another signed. It was continually asked, why the Germans did not hold out. Many were locked up in cellars, but they were all reduced at last to signing, by means of truncheons, wire ropes and iron bars. Poles were specially employed to thrash the Germans, and received 13 000 zlotys a day for doing it.

Suddenly the order was issued, also in our village; all Germans were ordered to go at once to a meeting. Here they were received by 5 members of the Polish authorities, and by the police (militia and secret police). The torturing began. I was asked: "Will you sign as a Polish woman?" "No." "Why not?" "Because I am a German woman". I was then asked, where I had been born, district and province. "District so and so, and province East Prussia". "You were born in Masurian Poland." "No." "Where is your mother?" "She is ill in bed." "She was also born here?" "Yes." "She is also a Polish woman like yourself." "No, I am a German, and the daughter of a German mother." "This is Poland here, and anyone born here is a Pole." "I am not a Polish woman; when I was born, all this belonged to the German Reich." Then he shouted at me not to be so impudent. I was threatened with being brought to the Police station. They asked me where my father was. "He was shot on the 23. March by Poles." I was told not to say that again, and they observed, that he was not shot by Poles but by bandits. "I am not going to sign. I am going to cross the Oder." I was put back into the cellar.

There were 80 Germans in our village, and they all remained steadfast. They were brought out, and put into a truck; those who did not get in were further tormented; then some of them signed. We then came into the cellar at the police station, every few minutes they tried to make us believe, that we must sign. In the cellar we met women, who had been there for 8 days without food. Some of them had permits to move into quarters across the Oder, and all the documents for departing to their husbands. The Poles dealt particularly with these women. "Not one of you is getting out. If you don't sign, then you will be sent to Warsaw and Siberia, to be put into a forced labour camp." We were ready to suffer this, but as German citizens. We were then dealt with more severely. We all had to go to the Secret Police, and they would be sure to make us submit.

Then they said to us: "An order has come from Moscow, that all Germans have got to sign. The West Powers are in agreement, and the English and the Americans have been in Warsaw, and have confirmed, that they are going to do nothing for the Germans here in Poland, and will receive no Germans into their zones, as there is a great famine there. Further, all East Prussians are going to be expelled by them, and sent here. If we don't sign, we are not going to come out unscathed." That was shouted at us so violently, that our nerves could not stand it, and many of us women collapsed.

Then we were to be put in the hospital. When I recovered, I was determined not to sign; as far as I was concerned my life was finished, and I was determined to die as a German. But our votes were of great importance to them, and we were actually brought to the hospital. There I collapsed again, but by means of drops, injections and tablets, they restored me to consciousness. After 3 days we were fetched by the police, and conducted, like the worst criminals, through the street back to the cellar. In spite of being so ill, we were put into the coal cellar behind strong iron bars. Here things were lively, and we were examined every few hours.

There were very many men there, from youths to very old men. The Poles tore their clothes from their bodies, and beat them, naked as they were, with wire cords, sticks and iron bars. There was a father there with his two sons. The sons they did not beat, but the father so brutally, that he collapsed; a pail of water was thrown over his head, and they began to beat him again. He endured this for 14 days, and then came to his neighbour's wife, and said he had signed. Enough violence breaks iron wills.

A daughter, who was locked up in another place, came to her 65 year old mother, and told us that a young woman and a young girl had been brought outside to the woods and raped. Thereupon, they signed, and then reported everything to the authorities. I then heard, that this woman was taken away in the night by a truck, and that since then it was not known where she was.

Some women told us, that they had to stand outside in their chemises, and that young girls had to carry water, naked as they were, and this was in February. It was, therefore, a lie, when they told us again and again, that we should not come out of the cellar as Germans. The last night of the 8 days that I was there, there was hell upon earth. The men were so thrashed, that they could no longer endure it, and the next morning all signed. Women were fettered and beaten so hard, that the blood spurted up to the ceiling. We at last saw, that it was useless, for who would gain, if all our bones were broken, and at the end we had to sign.

I had to suffer all the more, because I could not speak a word of Polish, and always had to have an interpreter, and this made them hate me all the more, for I repeatedly said: "I can't speak a word of Polish, and even if I sign you will keep me locked up in the cellar." "No", they said, "we shan't do that." But now they lock up people, who speak German, for they maintain, that Polish is our mother tongue, and German a foreign language.

I was so ill, and did not know what to do. They observed this, and asked why I was risking my health. I must sign, and then they would help me. But I took no notice of this, for I knew what their help meant. All the same they gave me some pushes and blows in my face, and I was at last forced to sign.

I was the last person in our village to sign. I came home, collapsed, and was unconscious for 3 hours, and then severely ill for 14 days. I cannot even recuperate today, nor console myself for having signed. On the form, which I signed, stood the words: "I request to be granted Polish citizenship." I also had to give two witnesses to testify, that this was true. They had blackmailed me, and this was no request on my part, but it was impossible to continue to resist such violence.

The district of Sensburg had a population of 12 000 Germans, and now there are only a few left here and there. The district of Ortelsburg was also compelled to sign. There the people were treated much worse. The Germans had to run the gauntlet between knives, and were continually pricked with needles. Many people paid for all this with their lives, went mad, hanged themselves in desperation, or died from the beatings.

I would now like to put the question as to whether we cannot be freed from the great wrong done us. Have we poor Germans really been forgotten? For although we were forced to sign, our hearts and blood remain German, and we appeal to heaven and to you for help and emancipation. Have mercy on our lot.

No. 382

Letter of K. M. from the village of K.,
district of Sensburg in East Prussia
Photo copy. 24. January 1952.

Call for help against attempts at polonisation made for years by Polish authorities in East Prussia

We are in the direst need, and appeal to our fellow countrymen in Western Germany, as we Germans are confronted with new excesses for the purpose of polonisation. As a result of years of experience, we know that the Polish authorities intend to force us to become Polish citizens, and that they will employ every form of cunning, deception and inhuman brutality, in order to attain their ends. We seriously fear, that the cruel excesses will be repeated.

This time it is a question of identity cards with photographs and fingerprints, which everyone must have. The police are carrying out the procedure, and anyone who refuses will be punished.

As long as we are compelled to live here, we recognize the need of identity cards, if they show our German nationality, as we are Germans, and want to remain such. The Poles, however, will never give us such identity cards.

We refuse to accept Polish identity cards, which stamp us as Poles, and we shall, there fore, again be thrown into prison.Here we shall suffer the same most inhuman treatment, as during the option procedure carried out in February 1949 and which, in spite of all our protests, is still regarded as a valid option.

How long are we to suffer this ceaseless persecution, without any protection being afforded us? Why are we not left free to decide for ourselves, but treated like slaves? Our health has suffered very much, as a result of the nerve-shattering life of the past years. In order to remain Germans, we suffered the expropriation of our farms in 1945, and worked for the Poles. We were robbed, insulted, beaten, ill-treated, and have starved and lived in rags with strange people.

We have applied, in our desperation, to the government of the German Democratic Republic (Soviet Zone), but expect no successful result. Our applications for resettlement, as also protests against the torture option of 1949, to all competent Polish authorities have been refused, and returned to us as unfounded. Are we condemned to live forever in these circumstances, which are breaking us, and are we never to be reunited with our relatives in Germany? We have not voluntarily remained here, but want to live as Germans, as long as we are waiting for our resettlement. We are bound by no ties to this Polish state. The certificate drawn up by the Federal government of West Germany, is not recognized by the Polish authorities as an identity card.

It would seem, that we are to remain defenseless victims of the arbitrary treatment of Polish despotism, unless help comes from somewhere.

GLOSSARY OF GERMAN WORDS

Altreich. Territory of the *Reich* within the frontiers of 1935.

Gau. Designation for the largest organization district of the National Socialist Party. *Gauleiter,* the political leader of such a district, who, by reason of this dictatorial powers, influenced the whole juridical and administrative authorities of such an area. The *Gauleiter* was, therefore, a most important factor in the dictatorship of the Party. In the annexed eastern territories the *Reichsgaus* were at the same time administrative districts *(Reichsgau Danzig West Prussia, Reichsgau Wartheland).*

Generalmajor a. D. Retired Major General.

Haff. A bay, frith or gulf, separated by a tongue of land from the sea *(Frisches Haff, Kurisches Haff).*

Kreis. In Prussia, later throughhout Germany a rural or urban district i. e. subdivision of a *Regierungsbezirk.* (See *Regierungsbezirk.)* In the organization of the Party the sub-district of a *Gau,* where the political leader of a *Kreis (Kreisleiter)* played the same part as the *Gauleiter* in a *Gau* (See *Gau).*

Landrat pl. Landräte. In Prussia, later throughout Germany, the highest government administrator of a *Kreis.* Under the pressure of the *Kreisleiter.*

Nehrung. A narrow strip of land, or coastal beach belt, separating a bay, frith or gulf, called *Haff,* from the sea *(Frische Nehrung, Kurische Nehrung).*

Oberpräsidium. The administrative office of an *Oberpräsident* (See *Provinz).*

Ortsgruppenleiter. The political leader of a town or village, in large towns or cities there were often more than one *Ortsgruppenleiter.* He exercised great influence on the communal authorities, and often put them under pressure. All political leaders, whether the *Gau-, Kreis-* or *Ortsgruppenleiters* were responsible to the National Socialist government for indoctrinating the whole population of their district.

'Party' always refers to the National Socialist Party.

Provinz. A larger administrative district. In Prussia a state administrative district, which used to be organized into *Regierungsbezirks* and *Kreises.* The highest administrative official of a *Provinz* was the *Oberpräsident;* from 1934 he was the permanent representative of the *Reich* government. He corresponded to the *Reich* governors in the different German states. The *Gauleiter* was generally at the same time the *Oberpräsident.*

Regierungsbezirk. In Germany a government district corresponding to the county in England. *Regierungspräsident* the highest government official in a *Regierungsbezirk.* He may be compared in a large degree to the lord-lieutnant or sheriff of a county in England. In Nazi Germany he was continually under the pressure of the *Gauleiter.*

SA (Sturm=Abteilung). Storm troopers, a fighting organization of the Nazis used against civilians, particularly, for preventing interruptions at public meetings of the Nazis, and for fighting the Communists.

SS (Schutz=Staffel). Hitler's body guard. During the war it was very much enlarged in numbers and militarized as the Waffen-SS (SS in arms). Here it included all arms of the army, and became an elite formation.

Volksliste. Categorization of the native population in Poland into 4 classes, graded from Class I (pure ethnic Germans) to Class IV (pure ethnic Poles).

Volkssturm. The last men called up in 1944 for the defense of the *Reich.*

Werwolf. Groups organized from the Hitler Youth for continuing the fighting. behind the lines of the occupation troops. It only went into action individually.

REFERENCES

1) Up to May 1944 10.7 million men were called up for military service in the *Reich* (within the frontiers of 1937).
See "Wirtschaft und Statistik" (Economy and Statistics), published by "Statistisches Bundesamt" (Federal Statistical Office), Wiesbaden, 3. year of publication, No. 7, July 1951, p. 271.

2) For the numbers and nationalities of the prisoners of war and foreign workers who were in Germany during the war see "Wirtschaft und Statistik", as above and in particular "Das deutsche Flüchtlingsproblem" (The German Refugee Problem), special number of the "Zeitschrift für Raumforschung" (Journal for Area Research), published in Bielefeld 1950, p. 5 and p. 37.

3) The census held in the German Federal Republic in 1950 indicates to some degree the extent of the emigration of Germans during the war beyond the German frontiers of 1937. This census shows that there were altogether 686 000 persons in the Federal Republic who were not, like the majority of the East Expellees, in the expulsion territories on 1. September 1939, but that they emigrated to these territories during the war. Most of them had received administrative and management jobs in the 'annexed eastern territories' and those placed under German administration which were beyond the *Reich* frontiers.

4) In 1944 still only about a half of the 800 000 ethnic German resettlers had been accommodated in the 'annexed eastern territories'. The other half was still mostly in camps in the *Altreich.* This fact is evident from "Kleiner Umsiedlungsspiegel" (Small Resettlement Mirror) hectographed and issued for service use in January 1944 by the "*Reichskommissar* für die Festigung deutschen Volkstums" (The *Reichskommissar* for the establishment of ethnic Germans in life).

5) See "Wirtschaft und Statistik", 1. year of Publication, No. 8 (November 1949) p. 228.

6) To be seen in "Statistische Berichte" (Statistical Reports) published by "Statistisches Bundesamt", Wiesbaden, No. VIII/19/1, p. 24.

7) See "Das deutsche Flüchtlingsproblem", special number of the "Zeitschrift für Raumforschung", 1950, p. 38.

8) Drawn up according to the "Verbrauchergruppenstatistik" (Statistics of Categories of Consumers) during the war, which was published on 28. February 1953 in "Statistische Berichte" of the "Statistisches Bundesamt", Wiesbaden, No. VIII/19/1. The number of the population of Danzig according to the census of 10. October 1941, and according to the statistics of categories of consumers for August/September 1944.

9) At the end of 1944 there were 2 837 000 people living in Berlin compared with 4 339 000 according to the census of 17. May 1939, cf. "Statistische Berichte" No. VIII/19/1, p. 24.

10) These numbers are based upon the statistics of the Registrar for Births, Deaths and Marriages, which were published until 1944 in "Wirtschaft und Statistik" of the "Statistisches Reichsamt" in Berlin. It was only possible to ascertain the numbers between the beginning of the year 1939 and the end of 1943, which is not the same as the whole period of the war. The numbers, however, indicate approximately the increase of the population during the war, as the increase in the population in 1944 was comparatively small, and corresponded approximately to the increase during the eight pre-war months (January to August) of 1939.

11) Including the *Regierungsbezirk* (Government District) of West Prussia.

12) Including the whole Government District of Stettin.

[13] Including the parts of the Government District of Frankfurt/Oder lying on the west of the Oder.

[14] The figures given for the number of the population of East Germany in February/March 1944 are based upon the "Große Verbrauchergruppenstatistik" (Comprehensive Statistics for Categories of Consumers) for the 59. period of rationing. They were published in "Statistische Berichte" No. VIII/19/1. Owing to the number of rationed prisoners of war and civilian workers being given there, it was possible by elimination of these to give the numbers of German civilians. As the dividing into *Provinzes*, on which the statistics of categories of consumers is based, is not the same in the case of East Pomerania, East Brandenburg and Silesia as the Oder-Neisse frontier, the figures have had to be calculated accordingly.

[15] The evacuation of refugees owing to air raids was essentially only a transfer within Germany, and, therefore, hardly affected the total number of the population in the *Reich*. The decrease and increase of the population, which took place in the different *Provinzes* as the result of evacuations, can be approximately ascertained by calculating the deviations from the changes in the number of population in the whole *Reich*. For the varying increase of population in the different *Provinzes* is taken into account in the birth rate.

[16] When the census was held in 1933 the following were the figures for the mother tongue spoken in East Germany to the east of the Oder-Neiße:

Polish	113 010
(99 193 in Upper Silesia)	
Polish and German	285 092
(266 375 in Upper Silesia)	
Masurian	15 689
Masurian and German	24 103
Lithuanian	965
Lithuanian and German	1 272
Cashubian	976
Cashubian and German	1 298
Total	442 405

(cf. "Statistik des Deutschen Reiches" vol. 451, No. 4, p. 46.)

[17] This was clear from the Reichstag elections. Thus in Upper and Lower Silesia, in East Prussia and Pomerania only 42 710 persons voted at the Reichstag elections on 14. September 1930, "Die Wahlen zum Reichstag am 14. 9. 1930", (The Reichstag Elections of 14. 9. 1930) Berlin 1932, for the Polish-Catholic People's Party. As only a part of the population was eligible for voting, and all eligible did not vote, the number of Polish votes indicates a Polish minority of at the most 100 000 persons. And here the fact must be taken into consideration, that the Polish minority, which was concentrated in Upper Silesia, was stronger immediately after World War 1. The number of Polish votes continually decreased after 1921, as a result of the emigration of Poles and the gradual political assimilation.

[18] Between 1919 and 1923 several hundreds of thousands of Germans were compelled, chiefly through economic boycotting, to leave the *Provinzes* of West Prussia and Posen, which had been ceded to Poland, in accordance with the Treaty of Versailles.
cf. H. Rauschning: "Die Entdeutschung Westpreußens und Posens. 10 Jahre polnische Politik" (The Degermanisation of West-Prussia and Posen. 10 Years of Polish Policy), published in Berlin in 1930.

[19] The figure given for the number of Germans in Poland is based upon the statistics given in the "Kleinen Umsiedlungsspiegel". Only the ethnic Germans registered in *Volkslisten* Nos. I and II are to be regarded as original German inhabitants. Those in *Volkslisten* Nos III and IV must generally be regarded as persons, whose original German origin is very doubtful.

[20] The figures given for the population of the Freie Stadt (Free City of) Danzig and the Memel Territory are based upon the census of the 10. October 1941.

The number of *Reich* Germans, who settled in Danzig and the Memel Territory after 1939, has been estimated. At the most two to three percent of the 394 000 original inhabitants of Danzig felt themselves to be Poles. Likewise, there is only a negligible number of Lithuanians among the original inhabitants of the Memel Territory.

[21] "Geschichte des Zweiten Weltkrieges" (History of World War 2) by Tippelskirch, published in Bonn in 1951, pp. 529 sqq. gives details of the Russian offensive.

[22] cf. "Ausländische Dokumente zur Oder-Neiße-Linie" (Foreign Documents on the Oder-Neiße-Line) (Osthandbuch No. 6) published by the "Deutsches Büro für Friedensfragen" (German office for Questions of Peace), Stuttgart 1949, p. 52.

[23] Detailed statements by authoritative members of the provincial administration of East Prussia about the building of the eastern line in East Prussia, particularly about the fatal work of Koch, contain a series of unpublished reports in the "Dokumentensammlung".

[24] cf. Report No. 109, p. 146, and J. Kaps: "Die Tragödie Schlesiens 1945—1946" (English Edition "The Tragedy of Silesia 1945—1946"), published in Munich 1952/53, p. 90.

[25] There are numerous details about this in the unpublished reports in the "Dokumentensammlung".

[26] cf. the Report No. 23, pp. 141 sqq.

[27] We shall go more fully into this matter, in the following descriptions of the flight from the Red Army, in the different *Provinzes.*

[28] Details in Tippelskirch's "Geschichte des zweiten Weltkrieges", published in Bonn 1951, pp. 562 sqq.

[29] See Tippelskirch, pp. 564 sqq.

[30] There is an unpublished report in the "Dokumentensammlung", on the fighting and trekking of the population, by *Generalmajor a. D.* Müller-Hillebrand.

[31] There were practically no expulsions from the Memel Territory, which was incorporated in the Soviet Republic of Lithuania. Therefore, we can estimate, on the basis of the number of Memel Germans now in Germany, how many of them came out of the Memel Territory not by means of fleeing. In 1941 the Memel Territory had 134 000 inhabitants. Almost 50 000 are now in the Federal Republic. On the basis of the ratio of distribution, it can be assumed that there are now about 30 000 Memel Germans in the Soviet Zone. Of the remaining 54 000 15 000 to 20 000 will either have perished on the flight, or have returned at the end of the fighting to the Memel Territory; but there were certainly at least 30 000 still there, at the time of the Russian invasion in October 1944.

[32] Information on this matter is to be found in an unpublished report ("Dokumentensammlung") by *Generalmajor a. D.* Erich Dethleffsen, who served under General Hossbach in 1944, and was Chief of Staff of the 4. Army, which was operating in East Prussia.

[33] The Government District of Gumbinnen had 717 000 inhabitants in February/March 1944; cf. "Statistische Berichte" No. VIII/19/1, p. 24.

[34] Within the frontiers of 1939, i. e. including the Memel territory, but without the parts of the Government District of West-Prussia, which in 1937 belonged to East Prussia and which had about 300 000 inhabitants in 1939 and were incorporated in the *Reichsgau* Danzig-West Prussia. The Polish parts of the Government District of Zichenau are not included, and also not those of the district of Sudauen, which have an almost exclusively Polish population.

[35] cf. "Statistische Berichte" VIII/19/1 p. 24.

[36] Detailed descriptions of this operation are to be found in Tippelskirch's "Geschichte des zweiten Weltkrieges"; Thorwald's "Es begann an der Weichsel" (It began on the Vistula), 4. edition published in Stuttgart 1951; Matzky's

"Vertreibung der Ostdeutschen. Kriegsgeschichtliche Grundlagen" (Driving out of the East-Germans. Military-historical Fundamentals) (unpublished reports in the "Dokumentensammlung"); Freiherr von Weitershausen's "The Occupation of Silesia by the Russians from January to May 1945" in "The Tragedy of Silesia 1945—1946", published in Munich 1952/53, pp. 88 sqq.

[37] cf. Tippelskirch, p. 611.

[38] The demand of Colonel General Guderian, Chief of the General Staff, for the troops to be withdrawn from Kurland and to be sent into action on the Vistula, was categorically refused by Hitler and likewise the requests of the Army Commanders for their fronts to be shortened (cf. Tippelskirch, p. 613).

[39] Details in regard to the following sketch of operations in Tippelskirch, pp. 611—632, and pp. 654 sqq.

[40] There were similar measures of evacuation in other countries, during World War 2, for instance in France, where the population of Alsace was evacuated as a precaution in 1939/40.

[41] cf. "Statistische Berichte" No. VIII/19/1, p. 31.

[42] See in Second Section II.

[43] Formerly the *Generalgouvernement* and *Reichsgau* Wartheland. The flight of the German population from the former *Reichsgau* Danzig West Prussia is dealt with in the First Section IV 2c; that of the Germans from the Polish part of Upper Silesia in 2d.

[44] The eastern half had been in the hands of the Russians or Poles since the summer 1944.

[45] There is exact information in regard to the district of Wielun, where 30 000 Germans and 200 000 Poles were living at the beginning of 1945 (according to an unpublished report of W. Bräutigam of Wielun, in the "Dokumentensammlung".

[46] According to statements in the unpublished report of W. Bräutigam in the "Dokumentensammlung".

[47] In the numerous reports of former inhabitants of Lodz and the neighbourhood, there is no mention of a flight with a trek which was successful, only a few treks appear to have escaped in time, which proceeded directly to Silesia.

[48] About this there is an unpublished report in the "Dokumentensammlung" by Rudolf Bayer of Kutno, who describes the running down of the treks from Kutno in the area of Konin.

[49] It is evident that the majority of the German population got out of Posen. From other parts of the central *Reichsgau Wartheland* there are reports of transports going away until 20. January.

[50] cf. Report Nr. 109, pp. 147 sqq;

[51] There is no statistical material on this matter, but the great number of reports from Germans out of these districts make it fairly certain, that the number of those who succeeded in escaping was greater than that of those who were run down on the flight, or who voluntarily remained behind.

[52] From March 1943 until the end of 1944, 110 000 people had poured into East Brandenburg (cf. "Statistische Berichte" No. VIII/19/1, p. 25).
These people belonged almost exclusively to the 1.5 million Berliners, who were at this time evacuated from the capital of the *Reich*.

[53] This fact is evident from a comparison of numerous reports and also from a systematic questioning of expellees from East Brandenburg.

[54] See in First Section II,3, p. 13.

[55] The percentage was highest in the district of Braunsberg, where the population increased between September and December 1944 from 66 000 to 97 000.
(cf. "Statistische Berichte" VIII/19/1, p. 24)

[56] cf. Report No. 20, p. 133.

[57] cf. Report No. 8.

[58] cf. Report No. 23.

[59] One of the most serious of these attacks was at the end of January in the locality of Landsberg. Many treks, which had come from districts further east, fell into the hands of the Russians here.

[60] Reports Nos. 20 and 23 give us a small selection of the fates of refugees from various districts, and who were fleeing to the area south of *Frisches Haff* in order to try and get from there, across the ice to the *Nehrung.*

[61] cf. Reports No. 20, p. 134 and No. 23, pp. 137 sq.

[62] The unpublished notes of Kaftan (Dokumentensammlung), the director of the city office in Pillau, give us information about the number of the refugees who got to Neutief. They state that 10 000 to 12 000 people from Braunsberg and Heiligenbeil had come across the *Haff* and *Nehrung* to Pillau by 10. February 1945. These notes, to which reference is made, are based upon registrations made in Pillau, by the town and military authorities of many important occurrences during the last weeks of the war. We have not published them because they mainly refer to military and personal matters, and not so much to the course of the flight (unpublished report in the "Dokumentensammlung").

[63] This number may be regarded as being fairly accurate, on the ground of the exact statements at our disposal on the removal of the people from Pillau. We have also estimated, by systematic questioning, the number of people who remained in East Prussia, and of those who reached the west by land by 23. January 1945 (see end of chapter).

[64] See J. Thorwald "Es begann an der Weichsel", p. 194, 4. edition, Stuttgart 1951.

[65] The atrocities committed in and near Metgethen were generally known and increased the dread inspired in the German population of the Red Army. A series of descriptions are available of what was done in Metgethen. We have not published them, as some of the statements are not in complete concurrence, and have not been definitely clarified up to the present (unpublished report in the "Dokumentensammlung").

[66] This number can be regarded as fairly accurate. J. Thorwald in "Es begann an der Weichsel", p. 193 states indeed that 130 000 remained behind. Professor Dr. Erhardt, who lived as a medical practitioner in Königsberg from 1945 to 1947, states in an unpublished report in the "Dokumentensammlung" that 100 000 remained behind.
See also note to Report No. 171, p. 190.

[67] See the brochure of Hans Deichelmann "Ich sah Königsberg sterben" (I saw Königsberg die), Aachen 1949, p. 1.

[68] Apart from the publications already mentioned, see also Gunter Braunschweig's "Untergangstage in Königsberg" (Last days of Königsberg), in the "Jahrbuch der Albertus-Universität in Königsberg/Preußen" (Year-book of the Albertus-University of Königsberg/Prussia), 1953, pp. 182—231.

[69] Hans Deichelmann states on p. 6 of his brochure that the Russians estimated that 30 000 civilians perished as a result of the fighting.

[70] According to statements in the above-mentioned notes of Kaftan, the former director of the town office in Pillau.

[71] See First Section IV c, p. 40.

[72] According to the notes of Kaftan, director of the town office in Pillau; these notes are based on official data.

[73] cf. Report 33.

[74] See Knud Langberg's brochure "Flüchtlingsleben in Dänemark" (Life of refugees in Denmark), published in Stuttgart 1951, pp. 113 sqq.

[75] This number is quite reliable and is based upon a systematic examination of numerous questionnaires and reports, which give information about the number of those who remained behind in the different districts of East Prussia. This number increased considerably in the summer of 1945, as a result of the return of numerous East Prussians, who were overtaken by Soviet troops in Danzig West Prussia and Pomerania; see Second Section II.

[76] The total number of those who got directly by land to the west by 23. January, and of those who subsequently got over the *Haff* has been calculated on the basis of the other numbers. The ratio of both numbers to one another has been estimated, on the basis of partial statements from different reports and extensive enquiries regarding numerous East Prussian districts. Small variations are possible.

[77] cf. Report No. 23, p. 143.

[78] cf. Report No. 23, p. 143.

[79] cf. Report No. 23, p. 143.

[80] See above First Section IV, 2 A.

[81] cf. Report 8.

[82] There were about 1 million Germans and 700 000 Poles living at the beginning of 1945 in the whole of the *Reichsgau* Danzig West Prussia. On the other hand the area of Danzig and the districts on the East Prussian frontier were almost entirely German. In the other areas the proportion between Germans and Poles was on an average 1:2.

[83] This refers to the same congestion of treks, as in the neighbouring districts of Kolmar and Czarnikau which belong to *Reichsgau* Wartheland; we have spoken of these above in the First Section IV 2 A.

[84] In the case of the old German districts of West Prussia it is fairly sure, that 80 % of the population passed over the Vistula, on the other hand it is only possible to make very approximate statements, in regard to the areas more to the south. The flight of the Germans there took place almost under the same conditions as in the northern part of the *Reichsgau* Wartheland.
(See above First Section IV, 2 A)

[85] cf. the above statements in the First Section IV, 2 A.

[86] cf. Reports No. 20, pp. 154 sq., No. 23, pp. 140 sq.

[87] cf. Report No. 23, pp 140 sq.

[88] cf. Report No. 23, pp. 142 sq.

[89] Over three million Germans lived in East Pomerania and the *Reichsgau* Danzig West Prussia. Of these 900 000 lived in the territory which the Russians had occupied by the end of January 1945. If one reckons that about 200 000 to 300 000 refugees, from East Prussia, from the east and south of West Prussia, from the *Reichsgau* Wartheland and from the southern districts of Pomerania, were in the territory around Danzig, which was still unoccupied in February, and in East Pomerania, then there must have been at least 2.5 million Germans, in the unoccupied part of Pomerania and Danzig-West Prussia, at the beginning of March.

[90] cf. Report No. 69, p. 145.

[91] cf. Report 69.

[92] cf. Heinz Schön's "Der Untergang der Wilhelm Gustloff" (The Sinking of the Wilhelm Gustloff), published in Göttingen 1952.

[93] cf. Report No. 69.

[94] See above first Section IV, 2 B, p. 32.

[95] According to the notes of Kaftan which are here based on the reports of the German Naval Command East on Shipping transport in the Baltic (unpublished report in the "Dokumentensammlung").

[96] The fact, that the number of Poles in the German part of Upper Silesia was the same as the number of Germans in East Upper Silesia, was one of the reasons for the way in which Upper Silesia was divided after the elections on 20. March 1921, between Germany and Poland.

[97] cf. the document work "The Tragedy of Silesia 1945/1946", Munich 1952/53, p. 53.

[98] cf. "The Tragedy of Silesia", p. 53 and p. 107.

[99] It is at present not yet possible to give statistics, but the great number of individual reports containing estimates and to some extent reliable figures enable us to infer, that about half of the German population of the industrial district of Upper Silesia remained behind. cf. for instance Report No. 14 in "The Tragedy of Silesia". Here it is stated that in the town of Hindenburg alone (in 1939 with a population of 126 000) 30 000 men were interned by the Russians.

[100] Concerning the advance of the Russians into the industrial district of Upper Silesia:
cf. Reports in "The Tragedy of Silesia" on pp. 145—168.

[101] cf. Report No. 109, p. 146.

[102] On an average not more than 10 % remained behind, in some districts it was lower;
cf. Report No. 109, p. 146.

[103] cf. Report No. 109, p. 148.

[104] cf. Report No. 124, p. 150.

[105] In January 1945 Breslau had only 527 000 inhabitants in comparison with 592 000 in March 1944 (cf. "Statistische Berichte" No. VIII/19/1 p. 26). Over 60 000 persons, particularly women and children, had already been evacuated to the central part of the *Reich*, as Breslau had, in autumn 1944, been declared to be a fortress.

[106] cf. "The Tragedy of Silesia", p. 45 and p. 119.

[107] The statements, on the number of civilians still in Breslau during the siege, vary between 150 000 and 250 000. The number 200 000 is, therefore, a medium between the different statements.

[108] cf. "The Tragedy of Silesia" pp. 45—52 and p. 124 sqq; also the detailed eyewitness report on the siege of Breslau, entitled "Breslau 1945. Schicksal einer Stadt" (Fate of a town) which appeared in 1950 in the "Breslauer Nachrichten" (Nos. 29—34.)

[109] cf. "The Tragedy of Silesia", p. 51.

[110] cf. Report No. 124, p. 150.

[111] cf. Report No. 124.

[112] cf. Bojanowski-Bosdorf's "Striegau. Schicksal einer schlesischen Stadt" (Striegau. Fate of a Silesian town), published 1951, p. 55.

[113] cf. Bojanowski-Bosdorf's "Striegau. Schicksal einer schlesischen Stadt", pp. 68 sq. and pp. 88—92.

[114] According to "Statistische Berichte" VIII/19/1, p. 26, Liegnitz had 76 000 inhabitants in January 1945. To these must be added about 10 000 refugees, who poured into Liegnitz at the end of January and the beginning of February. Liegnitz was reception district, for the population of the district of Militsch to the east of the Oder.

[115] cf. in particular Thorwald's "Es begann an der Weichsel", p. 126.

[116] Reports Nos. 26—74 in "The Tragedy of Silesia" give a good picture of how the fighting vacillated in this area.

[117] cf. Report No. 49, p. 227 in "The Tragedy of Silesia".

[118] cf. Reports No. 109, p. 149, No. 124, p. 151.

[119] The following figures are based on systematic enquiries made about 9 Silesian rural districts, and on a comparison between numerous individual statements, out of reports from all Silesian districts. They can make no pretence to statistical accuracy, which in this matter it is impossible to attain, but as estimates they at least indicate the approximate ratio between the different groups of Silesian refugees.

[120] During the fighting for Königsberg and in the course of a German counterattack numerous papers were found in a Soviet regimental office. Among these papers were letters of Soviet soldiers, and Soviet newspapers, which showed

that Soviet soldiers were in every way urged to rape German women. A part of these papers has been translated, and is among the unpublished documents in the "Dokumentensammlung", the papers have been attested as such by the Chief of Staff of the fortress of Königsberg.

121) This is specially emphasized in a writing of Sabik Wogulow, a former officer of the Red Army. The writing is entitled "Wpobejdennoi Germanja" (In conquered Germany) pp. 9—17. It is also evident from the printed Reports, that the rapings were sometimes accompanied by feelings of hatred and revenge. (unpublished report in the "Dokumentensammlung").

122) cf. in this regard Sabik Wogulow, p. 17, and also Günter Braunschweig's "Untergangstage in Königsberg", p. 223 sq.

123) This has been done in the very praiseworthy work, "Dokumente der Menschlichkeit", published by the Göttinger Arbeitskreis, Kitzingen 1950.
English edition: Documents of Humanity, Göttingen 1952.

124) This is evident from different unpublished reports in the "Dokumentensammlung".

125) cf. Report No. 187, p. 208 sq.

126) For arbitrary shootings of this kind, for instance, compare report No. 69, pp. 143 sqq.

127) It was possible in the case of 22 different East Prussian districts to ascertain the names of the former inhabitants of altogether 455 rural municipalities having in all 152 124 inhabitants, and to find out what had happened to these persons. It was found out that altogether 1731 people in these municipalities were murdered by the Russians, when the Red Army marched in or afterwards. As only about 25% of the whole population of East Prussia fell into the hands of the Russians, this means that almost 4.5 % of those who remained behind were shot or murdered in other ways. The Soviet troops did not act quite so brutally in East Pomerania, the greater part of which was not occupied until March. In 432 small rural municipalities with a population of altogether 137 709, the number of those shot and murdered in other ways amounted to 1278 persons. As 50% of the population of Pomerania fell into the hands of the Russians this means that about 2% were shot or murdered in other ways, when the Soviet Army marched in or afterwards.

128) The Soviet soldiers were very much encouraged to do this by the fact that in December 1944, that is to say before the offensive of January in East Germany, the Commissar for Defense of the Soviet Union issued a very extensive and special permission for members of the Red Army to send packages from Germany to Russia. A translation of this order is to be found in the not published material of the "Dokumentensammlung". Concerning other encouragement to plunder see also the descriptions in note 122.

129) Concerning Königsberg in this regard cf. Report No. 171, p. 191.

130) Concerning the course of the fires and their consequences in the towns of Pomerania cf. for Stolp Report No. 208, p. 222.

131) cf. "Osthandbuch" Number 18, published by "Deutsches Büro für Friedensfragen", Stuttgart 1949, p. 5 sqq.

132) cf. for instance Report No. 8, p. 129 sqq.

133) Sabik-Wogulow writes about this matter on p. 18 of his report as follows: "A handbill was distributed among the officers and men, and was signed by Marshal Zhukov. In the handbill the members of the Red Army were called upon to stop murdering, setting fire to buildings and raping German women, and also to leave factories intact. This was all declared by him to be sabotage. The last sentence in the handbill was literally as follows: "Soldiers do not forget, out of lust for a German girl, why your native country called you."

134) cf. the last part of the Report No. 8.

135) cf. the last of the Report No. 124 and the report No. 224, pp. 236 sqq.

136) See Third Section I.

137) cf. Report 124, p. 152.

138) cf. Reports Nos. 296 and 303; further "The Tragedy of Silesia", p. 70 sqq and Report No. 2 printed there pp.127 sqq.

139) See Second Section IV, 2.

140) Detailed description of experiences and conditions during the return is to be found in Report No. 124.

141) See J. F. Byrnes's "Speaking frankly". New York and London 1947 p. 70. German edition: In aller Offenheit, Frankfurt 1949, p. 49.

142) See First Section IV, 2d.

143) cf. "Dokumente zur Austreibung der Sudetendeutschen", published by the "Arbeitsgemeinschaft zur Wahrung Sudetendeutscher Interessen", Munich 1950; English Edition: Documents on the Expulsion of the Sudeten Germans, Munich 1953.

144) cf. Reports No. 109, pp. 148 sqq, No. 124, p. 152, No. 224, pp. 256 sqq.

145) cf. Report No. 109, p. 149, No. 124, p. 151 sqq.

146) cf. Report No. 124, p. 152.

147) The Germans are not included who remained in the Polish part of Upper Silesia or returned back there.

148) cf. pp. 57 sqq.

149) cf. First Section IV, 2c.

150) This is evident from a comparison of different single statements in unpublished reports and from a systematic questioning of the expellees from these districts. (the result is to be found in the "Dokumentensammlung").

151) See First Section IV, 2b, p. 33.

152) See First Section I, p. 3.

153) cf. Report No. 179.

154) There lived at that time about 70 000 Germans in Königsberg.
cf. note 437.

155) The figures given for the population after the flight and after the return are based chiefly on averages, which were arrived at from systematic enquiries and a comparison of the statements, in reports on the number of the population in different East Prussian districts and localities. Although they cannot claim to be statistically accurate, they, nevertheless, give us a reliable picture on how great the changes in the number of the population were.

156) Including the Memel Territory with 134 000 inhabitants, according to the census of 10. October 1941 and also including the Government District of West Prussia with 310 000 inhabitants according to the rationing figures for February to March 1944.

157) The fact that the number of the population in East Pomerania was the same before and after the return from the flight from the Red Army does not indicate, the people did not return in great numbers. It is explained by the fact that the number of refugees, who had fled from East and West Prussia to Pomerania and had gone away again, was about the same as that of those who had returned back to Pomerania from across the Oder.

158) Concerning what happened in the negotiations on the problem of reparations, during the Crimea conference cf. J. F. Byrnes's "Speaking frankly", pp. 27 sqq.

159) It is to be assumed, that the Russians intentionally did not deport Germans, from the territory which was later to be the Soviet Zone of Occupation, whereas on the other hand the deportation of Germans from the territory which was later put under Polish administration, was no disadvantage to the Russians and corresponded with the Polish policy of expulsion. It is only possible to make assumptions about the reasons for ending the deportation at the end of April, and that, although there were still thousands of Germans in many deportations camps, as for instance in Graudenz. It is possible, that

the deportation of civilians had proved unprofitable, as the deportees died in great numbers on the way to Russia. Moreover, there was a surplus of workers for the Russians at this time, in the form of the great numbers of German soldiers, who became prisoners of war in the months of March and April, and were mostly sent to Russia.

160) We have been able by studying numerous individual statements about the course of the deportations to give a picture of where the Soviet Army groups were stationed in East Germany.

161) cf. Reports No. 143, No. 187, pp. 209 sqq.

162) cf. Report No. 138, p. 157.

163) cf. Report No. 160, p. 170.

164) cf. Reports No. 166, p. 174, No. 169, p. 180.

165) cf. Report No. 151, p. 166.

166) cf. Report No. 208, pp. 223 sqq.

167) The usual deportations continued until the end of March, and were carried out by the Red Army in the other occupied territories of Silesia, see Report No. 151.

168) cf. the above statements on the number of the German population in East Prussia after the flight, p. 33.

169) cf. the Report No. 143 which deals with deportation transports of women from East Prussia to Russia.

170) cf. Report No. 140, p. 160.

171) Results according to the position in 1952. Those Germans are not included in the following numbers, who were put into deportation camps but died there or who were not brought to Russia as a result of illness, weakness or other reasons.

172) For further details see Second Section IV, 4.

173) cf. Report No. 169, p. 180.

174) cf. Report No. 166, p. 173.

175) For Graudenz cf. Report No. 166, pp. 173 sqq.

176) cf. for instance Report No. 187, pp. 209 sqq.

177) See Second Section IV, 4.

178) cf. Reports No. 140, p. 161, No. 143, p. 163, No. 169, p. 180.

179) cf. Report No. 143, p. 165.

180) cf. Reports No. 166, pp. 175 sqq. No. 169, pp. 182 sqq.

181) cf. Reports No. 138, p. 158, No. 143, p. 164, No. 160, p. 170 sqq.

182) cf. Report No. 143, p. 164.

183) cf. Reports No. 138, p. 154, No. 143, p. 164, No. 169, pp. 187 sqq.

184) cf. Reports No. 138, p. 158, No. 143, pp. 164 sqq. No. 160, p. 170, No. 169, pp. 188 sqq.

185) cf. Report No. 143, pp. 164 sqq.

186) cf. for instance Report No. 169, p. 182.

187) cf. Reports No. 138, pp. 158 sqq. No. 143, p. 164, No. 151, p. 167, No. 166, p. 175, No. 169, p. 181.

188) The Polish deportees mentioned in several reports (cf. for instance Report No. 151, p. 168) are evidently germanized Poles of the time to the German domination, who had themselves registered in the German *Volksliste*, and were, therefore, afterwards regarded by the Poles as traitors. Just as many Russians of the Vlassoff army were deported along with Germans to Soviet labour-camps (cf. for instance Report No. 151, p. 168), also many of these Poles were deported to Russian camps.

189) cf. Reports No. 160, pp. 171 sqq., No. 169, pp. 186 sqq.

[190] cf. Reports No. 151, p. 164, No. 168, pp. 176 sqq.

[191] cf. for instance Report No. 160, p. 172.

[192] This is evident from a wireless report by Truman of the 9. August 1945 (published in the "New York Herald Tribune" on the 10. August 1945) on the Potsdam Conference.

[193] See Second Section II, p. 61.

[194] cf. for instance Report No. 179, pp. 203 sqq.

[195] cf. Report No. 179, p. 204.

[196] cf. for instance Report No. 171, p. 192, and also the brochure written by the Reverend Hugo Linck, "Königsberg 1945—1948" pp. 97 sqq.

[197] cf. Report No. 176, pp. 199 sqq.

[198] cf. Report No. 171, p. 193.

[199] cf. Report No. 171, p. 193.

[200] Concerning the preferential treatment of specialists cf. Report No. 179, p. 205.

[201] Inconceivable as this may appear, nevertheless, several reports leave no doubt, that human flesh was frequently sold and eaten in Königsberg, and that this very greatly shocked and disturbed the German population.

[202] cf. for instance Report No. 171, pp. 194 sqq.

[203] cf. Report No. 171, p. 194 and p. 197, see also H. Deichelmann's "Ich sah Königsberg sterben".

[204] cf. note 437.

[205] cf. for instance Report No. 171, p. 197.

[206] cf. Report No. 179, p. 205.

[207] cf. for instance Report No. 179, p. 204.

[208] cf. for instance Report No. 176, pp. 185 sqq.

[209] cf. Report No. 176, p. 198.

[210] cf. for instance Report No. 176, p. 198, also in particular Hugo Linck's "Königsberg 1945—1948" p. 77 and Hans Deichelmann's "Ich sah Königsberg sterben" p. 22.

[211] cf. "Ostwärts der Oder und Neiße" (To the East of the Oder and Neisse), published by Seraphim, Maurach, Wolfrum, Hannover 1949, p. 90 and pp. 103 sqq.

[212] cf. Reports No. 171, p. 194, No. 176, p. 201, No. 179, p. 204.

[213] cf. for instance Report No. 176, p. 199, further "Osthandbuch" number 19 p. 12 and numerous press notices (see "Pressedienst des Göttinger Arbeitskreises" 1951), No. 24, p. 3, No. 25, pp. 3 sqq; 1952. No. 20, p. 8.

[214] cf. for instance Report No. 176, p. 198. Detailed descriptions about the condition of agriculture in the part of East Prussia administered by Russia are to be found in "Osthandbuch" Number 18, p. 8, p. 17 and pp. 23 sqq.

[215] cf. Report No. 176, p. 200.

[216] cf. Report No. 176, p. 199.

[217] cf. Report No. 179, p. 204 and p. 207.

[218] cf. for instance Report No. 187, p. 217.

[219] cf. Report No. 179, p. 206.

[220] A part of the population, which was not capable of working, was expelled at the end of 1945 solely from some places on the Russo-Polish demarcation line, which passes directly through East Prussia.

[221] cf. for instance Report No. 171, p. 193.

[222] cf. Reports No. 171, p. 193 sqq., No. 179, pp. 204 sqq.

[223] cf. for instance Report No. 176, p. 202; see also Hugo Linck's "Königsberg 1945—1948" p. 139 and Hans Deichelmann's "Ich sah Königsberg sterben" pp. 40 sqq.

[224] Concerning the expulsions from the part of East Prussia administered by the Russians see Third Section I.

[225] As a result of systematic questioning of Memel Germans, who were still in the Memel Territory in 1945, it is evident that on an average 10—20% of the Memel refugees returned, that is to say about 10 000—15 000.

[226] These were increased by the fact, that in many parts of Pomerania and Lower Silesia also Polish military units were employed as occupation troops, in the frame-work of the Russian administration; cf. Reports No. 289, p. 285, No. 332, pp. 312 sqq.

[227] See Sabik-Wogulow's "Im besiegten Deutschland" p. 21.

[228] An order of the Soviet Army Command to evacuate the German population from Samland was found amongst the papers, which German troops seized in a Russian regimental office.

[229] The fate of about 15 000 Germans was particularly hard, who came into the hands of the Russians in Striegau in Lower Silesia and during the second half of the month of February were driven into parts of the hinterland.
cf. Bojanowski-Bosdorf's "Striegau. Schicksal einer deutschen Stadt" pp. 68 sqq.

[230] In Pomerania in particular there were numerous refugees from all conceivable parts scattered about and who lived together with the native population.

[231] cf. Report No. 208, p. 223.

[232] cf. Report No. 208, p. 224.

[233] To some extent registrations and cross-examinations were used as a pseudo-means for deporting. cf. for instance Reports No. 187, pp. 208 sqq, No. 208, p. 224; see also Second Section III.

[234] cf. Report No. 217, p. 230.

[235] cf. for instance Report No. 208, pp. 223 sqq.

[236] cf. for instance Reports No. 206, pp. 220 sqq, No. 208, p. 224.

[237] cf. Report No. 217, p. 228.

[238] cf. Reports No. 187, p. 214, No. 208, pp. 224 sqq.

[239] cf. for instance Report No. 217, pp. 228 sqq.

[240] cf. Report No. 217, p. 228 and p. 233.

[241] See Second Section III.

[242] cf. Reports No. 187, pp. 216 sqq., No. 206, p. 219, No. 208, pp. 224 sqq., No. 224, p. 242.

[243] cf. Second Section IV, 3.

[244] According to Polish statistics the number of industrial works and those of craftsmen were in July 1945 about a fifth of the number of such works, which existed in 1939 in German territory to the east of the Oder-Neisse.
(cf. "Osthandbuch", Number 19, pp. 13 sqq).

[245] cf. Reports No. 187, p. 215, No. 206, p. 219.

[246] cf. Report No. 187, p. 207.

[247] cf. "Osthandbuch" Number 18, pp. 6 sqq.

[248] cf. Report No. 208, p. 226.

[249] cf. Report No. 224, pp. 241 sqq.

[250] At the end of 1945 and during the years 1946/47 the situation had developed in such a way, that the Russians had the large estates in their charge, whereas the other farms and villages were under Polish administration; cf. Report No. 206, p. 220.

The handing over of the Russian military collective farms to the Poles took place in the first instance very gradually. According to various information it appears, that at the present time both in Pomerania, particularly in the locality of Stolp, and also in Silesia different large estates are still at the present time in the hands of the Russians. (cf. "Informationsdienst des Göttinger Arbeitskreises", year 1951, No. 10, p. 3 and No. 19, p. 3).

[251] cf. for instance Report No. 206, p. 220.

[252] cf. Report No. 224, p. 243, see also "Osthandbuch", Number 18, p. 7.

[253] cf. Reports No. 187, pp. 216 sqq, No. 224, pp. 242 sqq.

[254] cf. Reports No. 187, p. 212, No. 217, p. 229.

[255] cf. Report No. 208, p. 222.

[256] cf. Report No. 206, p. 220.

[257] cf. Report No. 224, p. 237.

[258] cf. Reports No. 217, p. 231 and p. 232, No. 224, p. 245.

[259] cf. Report No. 208, pp. 226 sqq.

[260] cf. for instance Report No. 217, pp. 229 sqq.

[261] See following chapter.

[262] See following chapter.

[263] cf. for instance Report No. 187, pp. 212 sqq.

[264] cf. Reports No. 217, p. 229 and p. 236, No. 224, pp. 240 sqq.

[265] cf. for instance Report No. 224, pp. 240 sqq.

[266] cf. for instance Report No. 224, p. 244.

[267] cf. for instance Report No. 208, p. 223.

[268] cf. Reports No. 187, p. 217, No. 208, p. 226, No. 217, p. 235, No. 224, pp. 240 sqq.

[269] cf. Article XIII of the Potsdam Agreement printed in the Official Gazette of the Control Council in Germany, Supplement No. 1.

[270] cf. the Protocol of the negotiations at Yalta concerning the frontiers of Poland, as quoted by J. F. Byrnes in his "Speaking frankly" pp. 30 sqq.

[271] The West Powers repeatedly emphasized the illegality of Poland taking possession of East Germany, and insisted on the observance of the condition in the Potsdam Agreement, that the west frontier of Poland could only be finally determined in a treaty of peace with Germany. This attitude of the West Powers was first publicly expressed in a speech of Churchill at Fulton on 6. March 1946, in a speech of Bevin, the British Foreign Minister, in the House of Commons on 25. July 1946, and finally in a speech of J. F. Byrnes, the U.S. Secretary of State for Foreign affairs, delivered in Stuttgart on 6. September 1946.

cf. the foreign documents published in "Osthandbuch" Number 6 and also Friedrich Hofmann's "Die Oder-Neiße-Linie", and W. Wagner's "Die Entstehung der Oder-Neiße-Linie", and the sources he gives.

[272] The decision to put East Germany under Polish administration (Article IX of the Potsdam Agreement) was formulated in a way, which differed very clearly from the decision to place the northern part of East Prussia under the administration of the Soviet Union (Article VI of the Potsdam Agreement). In regard to Poland the wording was: "The chiefs of the three governments emphasize and confirm their view, that the final determination of the western frontier of Poland is to be deferred to the meeting of the Peace Conference. The chiefs of the three governments are agreed that, until the western frontier of Poland is finally determined, the former German territory, east of the line from the Baltic immediately to the west of Swinemünde and from there along the Oder to the mouth of the western Neisse and along the western Neisse to the Czecho-Slovakian frontier including the part of

East Prussia which has not been placed under the administration of the Soviet Union, in accordance with the agreement at this conference, and including the territory of the former Free City of Danzig, shall come under the administration of Poland and shall in this respect not be regarded as a part of the Soviet Occupation Zone in Germany." On the other hand the text of the Potsdam Agreement was definite, in deciding the cession of the North of East Prussia to the Soviet Union, for the wording was: "The conference has on principle agreed to the proposal of the Soviet Government, in regard to the final transfer of the town of Königsberg and the adjacent territory to the Soviet Union, in accordance with the foregoing; the final settlement of the frontier will be reserved for the checking of experts."

[273] cf. "Ostdeutschland" (East Germany) published by the "Göttinger Arbeitskreis", 1. edition 1950, p. 85.

[274] "Dziennik Ustaw" (Daily orders issued by the Polish Government) Pos. 57/45; cf. "Wissenschaftlicher Dienst" (Scientific Service) of the Herder-Institute Marburg, 2nd year No. 1/2, pp. 42 sqq.

[275] By an order dated 25. May 1945 the decree of the 5. February 1945 concerning the exchanging of German marks was extended to the Free City of Danzig, and on the 6. May 1945 the law on "The expulsion of hostile elements from the Polish community" was passed. This law also applied to the Free City of Danzig.

[276] cf. Report No. 187, p. 212.

[277] cf. the article in the Polish paper "Rzeczpospolita" published on the 14. February 1950 and translated under the title of "Erfolge und Sorgen der Stadt Liegnitz" (Successes and troubles of the town of Liegnitz) by the Deutsches Büro für Friedensfragen, Stuttgart 1950.

[278] In other towns, for instance Stolp and Köslin the administration was taken over at the beginning of July.

[279] cf. "Wissenschaftlicher Dienst" of the Herder-Institute, published in Marburg, No. 5/1951, p. 129.

[280] See Arthur Bliss Lane's "I saw Poland betrayed" published in New York 1948. Translated extracts from the exchange of notes in "Osthandbuch" Number 6, pp. 109—111.

[281] cf. J. F. Byrnes "Speaking frankly" pp. 79—80.

[282] cf. Reports No. 187, p. 218, No. 217, p. 230.

[283] cf. Reports No. 206, p. 219, No 217, p. 232, No. 224, p. 239.

[284] cf. Report No. 217, p. 231.

[285] cf. Report No. 232, p. 252.

[286] cf. the Polish decree of 12. September 1944 in Dziennik Ustaw Pos. 21/44.

[287] cf. Dziennik Ustaw Pos. 354/46.

[288] The following chapter deals fully with the special measures of retaliation which the Poles adopted against the ethnic Germans.

[289] cf. Report 232. In addition there are available several unpublished reports in the "Dokumentensammlung" about the camp at Lamsdorf.

[290] cf. Report No. 232; this report is also confirmed by other unpublished reports in the "Dokumentensammlung".

[291] cf. for instance Report No. 232, p. 249.

[292] See for instance in regard to the camp at Grottkau the note 448.

[293] cf. Report No. 224, p. 246.

[294] This is stated in numerous reports from the towns of East Pomerania. Even in the year 1951 houses there were being pulled down in order to use the material for rebuilding Warsaw;
cf. the "Informationsdienst des Göttinger Arbeitskreises" year 1951, No. 22, p. 2.

[295] cf. for instance Report No. 224, p. 246.

[296] cf. Report No. 224, p. 246.

[297] cf. Reports No. 208, p. 225, No. 217, p. 231, No. 232, p. 251.

[298] cf. Reports No. 187, p. 216, No. 217, p. 230.

[299] cf. Report No. 217, p. 232.

[300] cf. Dziennik Ustaw Pos. 45/45, substituted by decree of 6. May 1945 Pos. 97/45, changed by decree of 23. July 1945, Pos. 179/45 and substituted by decree of 8. March 1946, Pos. 87/46, with further modifications and orders for carrying out Pos. 182/46.

[301] cf. Report No. 224, p. 238.

[302] cf. Report No. 217, pp. 229 sqq.

[303] Procedures of this type are for instance described in Report No. 217, p. 232.

[304] cf. Reports No. 206, p. 219, No. 217, p. 232.

[305] cf. Report No. 217, p. 230.

[306] cf. Report No. 224, p. 239.

[307] cf. Reports No. 208, p. 225, No. 224, p. 239.

[308] See "Poland, Germany and European Peace" part III published by the Polish Embassy in London (Press Department) 1947. Printed and translated in part in Friedrich Hofmann's "Die Oder-Neiße-Linie. Politische Entwicklung und völkerrechtliche Lage", Frankfurt 1940. (The Oder-Neiße-Linie. Political development and situation according to the Law of Peoples) pp. 44 sqq.

[309] cf. also Reports No. 208, p. 225, No. 224, p. 245.

[310] cf. Reports No. 208, pp. 225 sqq, No. 341, p. 316.

[311] cf. Dziennik Ustaw Pos. 17/46; see also "Wissenschaftlicher Dienst" of the Herder-Institute 1952, No. 1/2, pp. 40 sqq.

[312] see "Osthandbuch" Number 18, p. 22.

[313] cf. Report No. 206, p. 219.

[314] Details are given in "Osthandbuch" Number 18 p. 25.

[315] See decree of 13. November 1945, Dziennik Ustaw Pos. 295/45.

[316] According to official Polish statements based upon the Polish census of the 14. February 1946, there were 2 719 320 Poles in the "regained territories" in February 1946. Of these 992 000 were described as "autochthonous", that is to say persons, who were regarded as members of the Polish people, because they had lived earlier in these territories, and partly because they spoke Masurian, Kashubian or Polish Vernacular, and partly because of their voluntary or compulsory option for Poland. The number of new Polish settlers was not more than 1 726 000 in February 1946. With regard to the figures cf. "Europa Archiv" year 1946/47 pp. 595 sqq.

[317] Concerning the expulsion see Third Section I.

[318] According to Polish statistics more than 10% of the German farms in the districts administered by the Poles were occupied on the 1. January 1947 by discharged Polish soldiers. (cf. "Osthandbuch" Number 18, p. 15). In the years 1950 and 1952 the Poles were still publishing propaganda in Poland, to get more people to settle in the "Western territories". They distributed this propaganda in particular amongst the youth and soldiers.
(cf. "Wissenschaftlicher Dienst" of the Herder-Institute, year 2, 1952, No. 9, p. 231; year 2, No. 4, p. 99; year 3, No. 3, p. 94).

[319] cf. "Informationsdienst des Göttinger Arbeitskreises", No. 25/1951, p. 2.

[320] cf. "Wissenschaftlicher Dienst" of the Herder-Institute, year 2, 1952, No 4, pp. 96 sqq.

[321] Concerning the special treatment of 'autochthonous persons' under the Polish administration and also the problem of compulsory option see Third Section I.

[322] See "Ostdeutschland" published by the Göttinger Arbeitskreis 1950, p. 13.

[323] The following statements about the number of the population on the 1. October 1948 in those parts of East Germany under Polish administration are based upon what the Poles have published (see "Informationsdienst des Göttinger Arbeitskreises" year 1949, No. 6, pp. 3 sqq. and year 1950, No. 4, pp. 1 sqq). As the borders of the Polish government districts do not correspond with those of the old German *Provinzes*, we have, for the purpose of comparison, reckoned the numbers of the population for the 17. May 1935 as given in the German statistics for the area of the Polish government districts. As further the Polish administration incorporated parts of East Pomerania and East Prussia in the Polish government district of Danzig, which is not mentioned here, the following figures do not include the total number of the inhabitants of east German territory.

[324] cf. "Europa Archiv", year 1946/47, p. 597.

[325] ibidem p. 598.

[326] See particularly: "Osthandbuch" Number 18, p. 21, "Europa Archiv", year 1946/47, p. 597, "Wissenschaftlicher Dienst" of the Herder-Institute, year 2, 1952, Number 10, pp. 258 sqq.

[327] In 1948 80% of the large estates in the eastern territories of Germany were still Polish government domaines, and only 20 % were in the hands of agricultural cooperative societies.
(see "Osthandbuch" Number 18, p. 18).

[328] See "Osthandbuch" Number 18, p. 19.

[329] cf. Report No. 217, p. 236.

[330] Concerning the new localization and organization of the Polish government districts in May 1946, see "Europa Archiv", year 1946/47, pp. 593—595. There was another change made in 1950/51 (see "Informationsdienst des Göttinger Arbeitskreises", year 1951, Number 25 containing maps).

[331] cf. "Osthandbuch" Number 19, p. 24.

[332] According to the frontiers of 1937.

[333] cf. Alius's, "La ligne Curzon" (The Curzon Line), published in 1944, p. 71 and W. Wagner's "Die Entstehung der Oder-Neiße-Linie in den diplomatischen Verhandlungen während des Zweiten Weltkrieges" (The Origin of the Oder-Neisse-Line in the Course of diplomatic Negotiations during World War 2) published in Bonn 1953, pp. 83 sqq.

[334] cf. the Russo-Polish Agreement of 26. July 1944. Article printed in "Osthandbuch" Number 6, p. 55.

[335] cf. G. Rhode's "Völker auf dem Wege" (Peoples on the Move), published in Kiel 1952, which gives the numbers of Germans who had to leave Posen and West Prussia in 1919, as 700 000, p. 10. From the "Kleiner Umsiedlungsspiegel" is evident that only 440 000 original Germans were living in these territories in 1944.

[336] cf. Report No. 264, pp. 256 sqq.

[337] The Russians caused this order to be rescinded in May. cf. Report No. 268, p. 269.

[338] cf. Report No. 264, pp. 256 sqq.

[339] Dziennik Ustaw Pos. 16/44.

[340] Dziennik Ustaw Pos. 377/46 Articles 2 and 4.

[341] Dziennik Ustaw Pos. 16/44.

[342] In the decree of the 30. November 1944 § 1,1 there is the order: "The Public Security Authorities must arrest all persons, against whom there is room for suspicion" (Dziennik Ustaw Pos. 75/44).

[343] In Article § 4 of the decree of the 30. November 1944 (Dziennik Ustaw Pos. 75/44) there is the order: "The Public Security Authorities are to examine the arrested persons, and to send the files at the latest within 14 days from the date of arrest to the competent public procecutor of the extraordinary criminal

court." It was not until the 17. October 1946 that a new decree (Dziennik Ustaw pos. 324/46) ordered the arrested persons to be put before ordinary courts.

[344] cf. Dziennik Ustaw Pos. 29/45.

[345] cf. the decree of the 4. November 1944 (Dziennik Ustaw Pos. 54/44).

[346] Persons of Polish nationality who as special workers were indispensable to the economy, and were for this reason exempted from evacuation measures by the National Socialist Government, and who received preferential rationing, and also similar preference, in regard to moving about freely in the same way as those who were on the German *Volkslisten.*

[347] Dziennik Ustaw Pos. 30/45.

[348] Dziennik Ustaw Pos. 30/45, Article 1, Article 6 (1), Article 7 (1).

[349] ibidem Article 1 and Article 2 (1).

[350] Dziennik Ustaw Pos. 54/44, Article 2 and Article 3. Apart from criminal responsibility, anyone subject to punishment, in accordance with this decree, "was to be arrested, quartered in an isolated place for an indefinite period of time, and was to be put to forced labour. His property was to be confiscated, and also that of the members of his family who lived with him."
The same stipulations affected also persons whose application for rehabilitation had been refused by a court of law. In this regard there is the following order in the decree of the 3. May 1945, Dziennik Ustaw Pos. 96/45, Article 13: "The refusal by the court cannot be appealed against, and orders the applicant to be put in a camp for an unlimited period of time, to be subjected to forced labour, to be deprived of all his rights as a citizen, and the whole of his possessions to be confiscated".

[351] Dziennik Ustaw Pos. 310/46.

[352] Dziennik Ustaw Pos. 310/46, Article 1 (2).

[353] Dziennik Ustaw Pos. 270/50.

[354] Dziennik Ustaw Pos. 30/45, Section III.

[355] Black Sea ethnic Germans, who had come to Germany as resettlers, were transported even out of the western zones of occupation by Soviet commissions to the Soviet Union.

[356] See Second Section, IV, 3.

[357] cf. Report No. 264, pp. 254 sqq.

[358] cf. Report No. 264, pp. 257 sqq.

[359] cf. Report No. 268, pp. 271 sqq.

[360] cf. Report No. 268, p. 271.

[361] cf. Report No. 289, p. 285.

[362] cf. Report No. 268, p. 272 and p. 280.

[363] cf. Report No. 268.

[364] cf. Report No. 268, pp. 274 sqq.

[365] cf. Report No. 268, pp. 274 sqq.

[366] cf. Report No. 268, pp. 274 sqq.

[367] See First Section IV, 1.

[368] Concerning the origin of the idea of the Oder-Neisse-Line, cf. for instance Friedrich Hoffmann's "Die Oder-Neiße-Linie. Politische Entwicklung und völkerrechtliche Lage", published in Frankfurt/Main in 1949; Wolfgang Wagner's "Die Entstehung der Oder-Neiße-Linie in den diplomatischen Verhandlungen während des Zweiten Weltkrieges", published in Stuttgart 1953 and also the sources quoted therein.

[369] J. F. Byrnes's "Speaking frankly", pp. 29 sqq.

[370] See Robert E. Sherwood's "Roosevelt and Hopkins, An Intimate History" published in New York 1948, pp. 48 sqq.

[371] The first formulated decision of the Allies in writing concerning the expulsion of the Germans is to be found in the "5 point programme". In concurrence with the government of the U. S. A., Churchill recommended Mikolajczyk, the Prime Minister of the Polish Exile Government, on the 22. January 1944 to accept this programme. In point 4 was the following declaration: All the Germans within the new frontiers of Poland are to be expelled from Poland.
(see Arthur Bliss Lane's, "I saw Poland betrayed", published in New York 1948, pp. 55 sqq).

[372] See J. F. Byrnes's "Speaking frankly". p. 30

[373] Statement before the Press by Osobka-Morawski who was one of the leading members of the Polish Committee for National Liberation.
(cf. "Manchester Guardian" of 30. August 1944).

[374] See J. F. Byrnes's "Speaking frankly". p. 80

[375] This action is described in Reports Nos. 289—303.

[376] These evictions are described very fully in Reports No. 291, No. 295, No. 296.

[377] cf. Reports No. 295, pp. 296 sqq, No. 296, p. 298, No. 303, p. 300.

[378] See Second Section II.

[379] cf. note 453.

[380] cf. Report No. 341, pp. 315 sqq.

[381] cf. Report No. 289, p. 285.

[382] cf. Report No. 303, p. 301.

[383] In the very first phase of these expulsions it became evident, that all those were to be excepted from the general expulsion, who were useful as workers to the Russians, cf. notes 452 and 453, No. 296, p. 299.

[384] J. F. Byrnes's "Speaking frankly", p. 80.

[385] The wording of this plan is printed in "Europa Archiv", year 2. August 1947, 2. Folge, p. 823.

[386] cf. Report No. 307.

[387] Concerning the expulsions in southern East Prussia in autumn 1945 cf. Report No. 317, for the simultaneous expulsions in Pomerania.

[388] cf. Report No. 296, pp. 298 sqq.

[389] cf. Reports No. 307, p. 303, No. 341, pp. 315 sqq.

[390] cf. Report No. 325, p. 307.

[391] cf. Report No. 317, p. 305.

[392] cf. for instance Report No. 317, pp. 305 sqq.

[393] cf. Reports No. 187, pp. 217 sqq, No. 232, p. 251.

[394] cf. for instance Report No. 317, p. 305.

[395] The expulsions in the year 1946 are dealt with in the Reports No. 329, to No. 353. The Reports Nos. 329—332 deal with the expulsions out of Pomerania, and the Reports Nos. 341 und 353 with the expulsions out of Upper and Lower Silesia.

[396] Plunderings during the expulsions occurred also in the year 1946 very often, on the occasion of checking and during the transport. cf. Reports No. 330, p. 312, No. 332, p. 314.

[397] Printed in "Europa Archiv", year 2, August 1947, 2. Folge, p. 823.

[398] Printed ibidem p. 824.

[399] The text of the public placards, in which the Polish authorities notified the German population to the east of the Oder-Neiße of the conditions of expulsions, corresponded in general with the conditions laid down in the Anglo-Polish Expulsion Agreement of the 14. February 1946.

[400] Almost all reports on the expulsions in the year 1946 mention the merciless procedure of the Polish expulsion commandos, the misery marches of the expellees, and the shocking conditions in the assembly camps.
cf. Reports Nos. 329—353.

[401] See "Das deutsche Flüchtlingsproblem" (Sonderheft der Zeitschrift für Raumforschung), published in Bielefeld 1950, pp. 4 sqq.

[402] cf. Reports Nos. 329—332.

[403] cf. for instance Report No. 332, p. 314.

[404] Most of the expulsion transports out of Silesia went by way of Kohlfurt.

[405] See "Das deutsche Flüchtlingsproblem" pp. 4 sqq.

[406] What happened to the expellees in this regard was generally kept quiet, and only became known through rumours. It is expressly mentioned, that the British authorities put a stop to the expulsions in the winter of 1946/47.

[407] See Second Section IV, 1.

[408] cf. Reports No. 365 and No. 366.

[409] cf. Hugo Linck's "Königsberg 1945—1948", pp. 107 sqq.

[410] cf. also Hugo Linck's "Königsberg 1945—1948", pp. 136 sqq.

[411] cf. for instance Report No. 264, pp. 266 sqq.

[412] cf. Dziennik Ustaw Pos. 310/46.

[413] The expulsions in the year 1947 from Poland involved particularly the occupants of camps, in which there were chiefly sick people and those incapable of working. On the other hand the Germans capable of working were indeed registered in camps, although they were generally not there, but had been hired out to Polish farmers or owners of enterprises for forced labour.

[414] From the English word "to link".

[415] Of these 4228 were out of East and West Prussia, 4023 out of East Pomerania and East Brandenburg, 15 368 out of Silesia, 12 744 out of Wartheland and 5964 out of central Poland.

[416] It is only according to Polish statistics, that about a million of those people are today still in their homes, who were original inhabitants of the eastern territories of the *Reich*, and who had been living in the territory of Poland (according to the frontier of 1937) and in that of Danzig. These Polish statistics in various places assume, that there are about a million Germans still living in the eastern territories of Germany, who were there before the establishment of the Polish administration. These people are generally described in Polish statistics as "autochthonous"; cf. "Europa Archiv", year 1, p. 595, also Friedrich Hoffmann's "Die Oder-Neiße-Linie", Frankfurt 1949, part translations of Polish statements in "Poland, Germany and European Peace" (Official documents of 1944—1948, published by the Polish Embassy in London) particularly p. 45.

[417] See Reports Nos. 372—382.

[418] cf. Dziennik Ustaw Pos. 106/46. A very similarly worded law was passed on the 22. October 1947 for the territory of the Free City of Danzig (cf. Dziennik Ustaw Pos. 378/47). It is noteworthy, that, according to Article 3, the granting of Polish citizenship is also permissable for former German nationals, who did not live in Danzig, until after the 31. August 1939.

[419] cf. Dziennik Ustaw Pos. 25/51, particularly Article 3.

[420] In this case also members of the German armed services out of East Germany must be counted, because when they returned from captivity, they were also ranked as expellees. Those people, who were evacuated to East Germany in 1944 because of air-raids, may not be reckoned, and are not regarded as expellees, even although they were involved in the expulsions from East Germany. The best means of calculating losses is by means of the number of the population in 1939, including the increase of the population owing to births during the war, as this was given in the First Section, p. 3.

[421] If we take the year 1950 as key-year, then those expellees from East Germany need not be counted, who in 1950 were not in the territory of the Federal Republic, or in the Soviet zone but in Austria, or who up to this time had emigrated to other European states or overseas. On the other hand, the increased numbers of expellees need not be taken into account, which were caused by the normal increase of the population amongst the expellees in Central and West Germany from the time of their arrival until the year 1950. Both numbers are of about the same size, so that it can be assumed, that the difference caused by not including the expellees who had emigrated abroad, is balanced by the fact, that, when the expellees in the territory of the Federal Republik were registered in 1950, the surplus of births among the expellees after the expulsion is included.

[422] cf. First Section I p. 3 and p. 4.

[423] The following numbers for the territory of the Federal Republic are based upon the census of the 13. September 1950, and for the Soviet zone and Berlin upon the census of the 30. October 1946. We need not worry about the lapse of time between these two censuses, as the arrival of fresh expellees in the Soviet zone after the 30. October 1946 is well balanced by the emigration of expellees out of the Soviet Zone into the territory of the Federal Republic. The actual increase in the number of the expellees in the Soviet Zone from the end of 1946 until 1950 is generally estimated at a maximum of 400 000 persons. 250 000 of these came from the Oder-Neiße territories. After reckoning the number of these people who came from the different east German *Provinces*, these 250 000 have been added to the numbers, which were given in a census of 1950 for the territory of the Federal Republic and in the census of 1946 for the Soviet Zone.

[424] The following numbers for the persons of former German nationality, who are still in their homes, are based upon both German and Polish information. cf. also note 416.

[425] The number for the whole *Reich* of the soldiers killed in action and who died as prisoners of war is reckoned at about 3 million.
cf. "Wirtschaft und Statistik", year 1, Number 8, published by the "Statistisches Amt des vereinigten Wirtschaftsgebietes", November 1949, p. 228.

[426] The total number of civilians killed in the *Reich* as the result of air-raids amounts to about 500 000 (cf. "Wirtschaft und Statistik", published by the "Statistisches Amt des vereinigten Wirtschaftsgebietes", year 1, Number 8, p. 227). The number, therefore, of those killed in East Germany as a result of air-raids cannot exceed 50 000. This does not include those killed by bombing, during the flight from the Red Army or during the besieging of East German towns. These were in some cases very high, for instance as a result of the bombing of Dresden and also in the towns of Königsberg, Danzig, Breslau etc., which had been declared to be fortresses.

[427] This number corresponds almost exactly with the calculation of losses, which have been arrived at in other ways.
cf. for instance "Wirtschaft und Statistik", published by the "Statistisches Amt des vereinigten Wirtschaftsgebietes", year 1, Number 8, p. 228. The number can, therefore, be regarded as quite reliable.

[428] Including losses of the armed services.

[429] It is not possible at the moment to state the losses of the Germans from Bessarabia, the Dobrujia, the Bukovina etc, who had been settled in western territories of Poland, as those of them, who are at present registered in the territory of the Federal Republic, in the Soviet zone and in Berlin, cannot be statistically dealt with separately from the other German expellees from the south-east countries. For the 1. September 1939 is the key-date for all of them. This applies also to the *Reich* Germans, who moved to the west and central territories of Poland during the war.

[430] To the 789 000 Germans, who lived in 1944 in the territories of West Poland, (see First Section I, p. 6) must be added a further 169 000 Germans from East

Poland (Volhynia), who were mostly resettled during the war in Wartheland. (cf. "Kleiner Umsiedlungsspiegel")

431) Including losses of the armed services.

432) If one takes into account, that the more than 800 000 bombed out evacuees, from Central and West Germany, who were in the territory to the east of the Oder and Neisse towards the end of the war (cf. First Section I, p. 4), and who suffered great losses in the course of the flight and during the following Russo-Polish domination, are not included in this number, then it is evident, that the number of losses among these people has been estimated as too low and not too high.

433) In this way the Russian guards tested whether the prisoners had loosened the boards in the walls of the wagons.

434) This camp belonged to the camp district of Tscheljabinsk.

435) The Report of Waltraud U., of Zandersfelde, district of Marienwerder, about her experiences as deportee in Russia is to be found in the "Dokumentensammlung".

436) This was obviously regarded by the Russians as a legitimation of Czech nationality.

437) According to several estimates, which agree with one another, there were 100 000 persons in Königsberg during the siege. During the fighting for the town and during the first days after it had been captured, and when the mass of the population was driven out in all directions, 30 000 people perished according to Russian reports. (See Hans Deichelmann's "Ich sah Königsberg sterben", published in Aachen 1949, p. 6). The mass of the civilian population was kept for weeks by the Russians in temporary camps, where thousands of them died. This gap was filled up in the month of June and July 1945 by people returning from the flight. At the end of July, when the general registration took place, the number of German civilians in Königsberg was about 70 000. This is according to statements by Hans Deichelmann (p. 41), which he calculated from the number of registration forms. According to the statements, which agree with one another, of medical practitioners and clergymen in Königsberg, there were only between 22 000 — 24 000 Germans living in the town in the summer of 1947. Up to then about 2 300 people had received permission from the Russians to depart. (cf. Hugo Linck's "Königsberg 1945—1948", published in 1950 in Oldenburg, p. 118). According to cautious calculations almost 50 000 Germans died by the end of 1947 during the time of the Soviet occupation and administration. To these must be added 30 000, who perished as a result of the fighting, and of "propaganda marches" after the occupying of the town.

438) A tumbler is used for measuring (Tobacco etc.) in shops in Russia.

439) cf. Report No. 179.

440) cf. Report No. 365.

441) According to the official registration of 1939 Ludwigsort had 1252 inhabitants.

442) The agricultural productive area in the district of Heiligenbeil was 71 690 hectares before the war.

443) The list mentioned contains personal details of 69 dead persons, 34 of whom came from Ludwigsort. The deaths were distributed as follows: 1945 15 deaths, 1946 26 deaths, 1947 28 deaths.

444) cf. vol. I,2, p. 166; see also the publication of the Göttinger Arbeitskreis: "Dokumente der Menschlichkeit", published in 1950, p. 107.

445) cf. Reports Nos. 372—382.

446) Nominated by the Russian Military Commandant as German assistant.

447) In the districts of Lower Silesia in the neighbourhood of the Oder-Neiße-Line this action was begun as early as the end of June 1945.
cf. Report No. 365.

448) There is attached to the report a list of the persons of Grottkau and the neighbouring villages, who died in the camp. This list includes their names, the year of their birth, and the date of their death. We see from this list, that 332 persons died in the camp within 11 months. (37.3 % in the months of September and October 1945.) Of those who died 52 % were over 60 years of age, and 18.4 % children and young people under 20 years of age.

449) The film "Maidanek" deals with what happened in the concentration camp of Maidanek, district of Lublin, in the then *Generalgouvernement*, which was established by the National Socialist Government at the end of 1941. These disclosures are based upon the enquiries of the "Russo-Polish Extraordinary Commission for the Investigation of German atrocities in the destruction camp of Maidanek". Reports on this matter were submitted (D: USSR—29) to the military court at Nürnberg by the Russian prosecutor in February 1946 as evidence against the chief war criminals. Quotes from this evidence were repeatedly made. See "Prozess gegen die Hauptkriegsverbrecher vor dem internationalen Militärgerichtshof, Nürnberg, 14. November 1945 — 1. Oktober 1946".

Official text in the German language: Nürnberg 1949, vol. 7, pp. 419 and 497 sqq, 621 sqq, and 648 sqq.

450) This answer of the authoress can be understood in view of the terrible nature of the atrocities, which were unknown to the German people during the government of the National Socialists, until the end of the war.

451) The authoress states here that, in describing her experiences, she avoids mentioning names for definite reasons.

452) Numerous reports mention expulsions of an earlier date. For instance, a woman of Treptow states that a transport departed from her native town on the 27. April 1945. The levelcrossing man O.S. of the district of Belgard describes the plundering of refugee transports at the beginning of May 1945. Mrs. G. O. states in her report, that the aged and the sick were expelled from Treptow at the beginning of July. Likewise the chemist Ernst Gross of Naugard reports, that early on a Sunday morning in the middle of June Polish militia went from house to house proclaiming an order, in accordance with which all Germans had to leave the town within an hour. "We also loaded our belongings into a hand-cart, and went to the market, where the majority of the German population was already assembled. At the market square a Pole announced, that all those, who had not been called up by name, had to cross the Oder. I and sister Lisa were among those, who had been called up. We went back into our house, but the greater part of the population of Naugard had to leave their homes. Poles were already eagerly at work in the empty dwellings appropriating articles which had been left behind. The home for the aged was not affected by the evacuation, as there were no means of transporting the old people. A short time afterwards those, who had been expelled from my native town of Regenwalde, came through Naugard. I succeeded with the aid of a Polish official in getting my mother, who was 76 years of age, out of the misery column, I also got a sick sister out, and took her into our home. Both of them were on the verge of collapse, and would never have been able to go on foot as far as Mecklenburg."

453) These early expulsions were often prevented by Russian officials, as they did not want to lose the German workers.

cf. Report of W. S. of the district of Greifenberg, No. 332.

The following is mentioned in a report from Gardin, district of Regenwalde: "In the middle of Juni 1945 all the inhabitants were suddenly driven together in the village, and there was the order: 'Across the Oder'. Some families knew this would happen, and had already fled. Some had to remain behind to collect the booty for the Poles. When we reached Zosenow, the Polish soldier, who had brought us as far as there, told us to go into the wood, and that we should be able to come back after a few days, and then work for the Poles, for nothing more belonged to us. First of all, we helped in the hay-harvest, and then in the corn one. Suddenly we were called away from the field, in order to be loaded in farm-carts, and brought to Elvershagen. Many of the women and girls hid themselves. The Poles, however, did not succeed in carrying out their intentions, as the Russian commandant suddenly appeared from Stargordt, and in great excitement we escaped the procedure. As a precaution we then hid ourselves until evening in the cemetery."

[454] It is intended to publish the whole report in a series of brochures.

[455] The farmers of the village municipalities of the district of Belgard were most of them not expelled, until much later. A schoolmaster of Panzerin in the District of Belgard reports as follows: "The first 50 Germans were expelled from Panzerin on the 12. April 1946. These were mostly such as had no property, and refugee families from East Prussia. Most of the farmers had to remain as workers on their farms another year and a half, until autumn 1947."

Also Mrs. Ida Walther of Niedergöhle near Schivelbein reports, that in April 1946 only Germans were expelled, who were not fully capable of working, and that the most remained there, until the end of 1946. According to another report the first farmers of Simmatzig were expelled in May 1946, and put into the camp of Schivelbein.

[456] See report No. 289.

[457] The report in the following letter from the district of Sensburg gives an example of what happened, when the Germans were compelled to exercise their option for Poland. It describes the measures of the Polish authorities between 1949 and 1952 in the southern part of the territories of East Prussia, under Polish administration (Government District of Allenstein). There are a number of similar letters available from the districts of Osterode, Allenstein Rössel, Ortelsburg, Lötzen, Lyck and Treuburg.

[458] The authoress explains this in a letter of the 4. July 1949 by stating, that the Germans had in 1946 received an identity card from the Polish *Landrat,* in which they were described as German citizens. This identity card was valid until the 1. Februar 1949. They were now to be caused to take Polish citizenship.